

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

*Edited by* ROBERT HERRING

## VOL. 44 CONTENTS NO. 89

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*"He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him . . ."*



*Who that ever read the tale of The Prodigal Son failed to remember it? There is much philosophy in Books, taking the road of reason step by step ; but the story-teller has a still surer way with us. Lessons well taught are those one likes to remember.*

*No literature, no book, was ever so well-knit as the New Testament ; no library ever richer than the Bible. Fine*

*literature it may be, but this goes for nothing if we do not make it so by fair reading. Are we to be shy, ignorant, afraid? It is sober fact that what we cherish as civilization is built upon it. "Reading maketh a full man" — Shall we accept a Sunday ration? No feast is richer than the Bible.*

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The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

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JANUARY

## EDITORIAL

1945

I WROTE LAST month that instead of stating New Year resolutions myself I would outline some which it might be useful for others to make. A few of these may be lumped together. We would all be glad if some of us did not mistake minor successes for major victories or genuine gains for the final battle. Equally, it would help if others did not seek to enshroud us in gloom at a temporary setback. These are permanent manifestations of human nature, apt to be induced as much by weather as war (which is, indeed, a weather of the soul, man's self-created winter).

Alongside these may be added the boredom of public statements of short duration, designed to "brace" us, coupled with the perverse delight of other equally public statements that we may expect to be on the rack till the end of this century or next.

As irritating as either of these I find the attitude with which they are received. Incredulousness would not be the word, since in that there is always contained an element of surprise. Now there is no surprise at what we are told. Whether that be nothing, little, or quite a lot, it is tempting to dismiss it as only what is thought good for us. So much has the handling of censorship and propaganda achieved in this war. Yet parallel with this feeling goes a curious gullibility—not so much among the public, which at large is more politically conscious than before, but among those whose pretension it is to direct or form that consciousness.

I would like a more general admission that the new

world, so loudly heralded, will be made from the salvaged items of the old, and can therefore scarcely be better unless we have ourselves made ourselves better. And I would like to see more signs that this is taking place. Instead I see in all fields, from international relationships to literary politics, the familiar jockeying into position whose selfishness results in dissipation of energy and halted achievement.

I would like events in all fields to be seen as what they are, not only in themselves, but as part of the will to live or the will to die. These are the actuating forces behind human endeavour, and too often the two are mistaken. In peoples as in persons the will to die causes collapse, unrest, commotion. When these conditions are created dying becomes as it were legitimized. There are plenty of signs of this will to death abroad to-day. France was the most striking instance. Death, or collapse, may be followed by resurgence. But unless the processes are understood and unless what is really wished for is admitted, resurgence, like some reconciliations, can be incomplete.

It would help if all of us took stock of where we stand, that our energies might be canalized and our efforts not mistaken. So might we make both a year and world that are truly new, instead of drearily the same again. We have by now had enough of that, surely, to begin to know what it is worth.

# THE PRICE OF BOOKS

By SE'AN JENNETT

I MIGHT HAVE entitled this article, not "The Price of Books", but "The Expensiveness of Books", because I hope to put forward some evidence to show that books are, and long have been, too dear; and I want to do this now because there is nothing to suggest that books will be cheaper after the war—rather the reverse.

The price of a book, like that of any other commodity, is or should be based on the cost of its manufacture. That cost is not a stable quantity, because it varies inversely with the number of copies produced, but under pre-war conditions, when editions of two to five thousand were the general rule, it was from a quarter to a third of the selling price. This, of course, was not the only cost, for to it there had to be added the expenses of publishing, the author's royalty, and the bookseller's margin. Theoretically the retail price could be divided as follows:

25-33½ per cent cost of printing, binding, and material, including profits of printers, binders, etc.;

25-40 per cent publishing expenses, including advertising, storage, distribution, etc., and including publisher's profit;

10-15 per cent author's royalty;

25-33½ per cent bookseller's margin, out of which he must pay wages, rent, etc., the remainder being his profit.

These figures are intended to show the scheme only, and none of them is necessarily correct for any particular book.

The first thing that is obvious is that the price of a book includes more profits than one might have expected; and this little table does not show all of them by any means. This, however, happens with any manufactured article, and if the various profits made are reasonable there can be no complaint against them under our present system of economics.

The publisher takes the lion's share of the price; and the author the mouse's. The publisher, of course, undertakes the greatest financial risk, for he must pay perhaps a great

deal of money to have the book produced, and he does not necessarily make a profit from every book. If a book is not a success, he cannot claim assistance from the author or refuse to pay the printer. There should also be considered the fact that a publisher on occasion publishes books from which he does not expect to make any profit, on which indeed he is certain to lose. These are books that should be published but for which there can be only a small market. They increase the publisher's prestige, but at a price, and that price must be paid from somewhere; it is paid from the profits of the firm, in other words from the profits made on other books—thus the successful author of tripe may do some good without knowing it.

The author, one would imagine, is the most important person connected with the book; certainly he is indispensable; but he receives less even than the man whose only business is to sell the book over the counter. His royalty is apt to be looked upon by the public as so much easy money, and by the publisher as clear profit. It is nothing of the kind. The author, too, poor fellow, has his expenses. He must pay his rent and he must pay for his dinner; and at some time during his life he has paid, perhaps dearly and bitterly, for the ability and experience he has put into his work. He risks upon it the many hours of labour he has spent in writing it, with no assurance at the time, perhaps, that it will ever be published at all. If it does not find a publisher, all his expense and his labour are utter loss—that is his risk, and it can be a frightful one. If the book is published, his recompense may be out of all proportion small. A book may take a year, or even several years, to write, and when it is published it brings its author less than a hundred pounds, perhaps less than fifty, and that in dribblets over a period of years; even as a lump sum that is very little for so much work.

I said above that the cost of a book varies in relation to

the number of copies produced. This is so because in the production of books there are a number of charges that are incurred quite independently of the number of copies produced. These charges include those for setting the type, for blocks or plates to print illustrations or diagrams, and the preparation of the printing machine and of the various machines in the bindery. All these charges must be undertaken before a single copy of the book can be produced, and if only one copy were produced its price would have to include them all. For all the preparation is done simply to enable sheets of paper to pass through printing and binding machines, to emerge as a finished book. Once done, the preparatory work will hold good for many thousands of copies, even hundreds of thousands. Mr. Stanley Unwin pointed this out in an article in *Life and Letters* recently. If, then, the charges for preparatory work amount to £300, let us say, as they very well may, if we print only one copy it will cost £300 plus the cost of the passage of the sheets through the machines, which might be somewhere in the region of sixpence (it is impossible to reckon it in the abstract, so we might as well have a convenient coin). If, however, we produce a hundred thousand copies, the £300 is shared between them, and represents for each copy approximately three farthings, to which we add the sixpence aforesaid. The cost of the materials of which the book is made must be added to either the £300 *os. 6d.* or the  $6\frac{3}{4}d.$

Illustrated books are notoriously expensive in this country, particularly those with illustrations in colour. This is due in a considerable degree to the high prices charged by process engravers for blocks, prices fixed and maintained by a powerful and ruthless masters' federation. Blocks for a coloured reproduction of a painting, for example, may easily amount to thirty pounds, and if there are ten such reproductions in a book the initial cost is swelled by £300, plus the cost of very skilled and elaborate

make-ready on the printing machine, of printing, and of inserting the plates in the book. Under the system that makes the retail price of a book three to four times its cost price, this means an *addition* to the retail price of twelve to fifteen shillings for each copy of an edition of two thousand copies. Here again, however, multiplication of copies means division of the cost.

But English publishers do not think in terms of hundreds of thousands; they hardly ever think in hundreds of hundreds; their minds are attuned to thousands, and even the thought of ten thousand may produce a dithering of the strings. Two to five thousand is their common chord.

Now the population of this country is something over forty millions, and to that figure may be added some millions more to represent the English-speaking peoples abroad to whom books are exported. Not all of them, of course, yearn for books. Besides babies, imbeciles, and the blind, there are many who have no notion of books and never can have; and there are some, no doubt, who believe that books are of the devil, baiting the book of their particular creed. But the remainder, of people who do buy books, of those who would like to buy books if they could afford them, and of those who would become buyers if they could be conditioned to reading, is still a vast number. Among these millions of people, the publisher casts his little edition of two thousand copies, and sometimes, indeed quite often before the war, the response was disappointing, and the edition remained in some part in the publisher's warehouse or on the shelves of the bookshop, from which, under the on sale or return system, they would return at last, dilapidated and forlorn, to the publisher who sent them out.

What was the reason for the low sales of books in those distant times that we now like to call "normal"? I do not suppose that anyone knows all the causes, but among them



was poor education among the masses, restricted publicity, and high prices.

Now price in itself means nothing ; it can only be studied in relation to the amount of money available to the purchaser, for ten shillings is not at all the same thing to the man with ten thousand a year and the man with only three pounds a week. Before the war the price of an ordinary novel was 7*s.* 6*d.*, or 8*s.* 6*d.* if it exceeded a certain number of words ; at the other end of the scale a book on the fine arts might cost three, four, or five guineas, or even more than that. A working man, an artisan or a craftsman, could consider himself well paid in those days if he earned four pounds a week—over the greater part of the country, for example, printers received less than this. Out of this wage he had to pay his rent and provide for his family, to pay his fares to work, and a good many other things ; he achieved miracles with his money, and he even bought his house with it—in time—but he did not often buy a book. Even a printer, who at least got a trade discount of some kind, could seldom afford to buy books. His taste might be limited to detective stories, but if it was it had to be a very special occasion on which he paid 7*s.* 6*d.* for one ; for there was always something else that money might be spent on, something more utilitarian and more urgently needed than a novel. He had to consider the expense of filling his leisure and he was always aware that if he needed entertainment he could get better value, measured in time and of the same kind, from the cinema for 2*s.* 6*d.*, or if he lived in the north for a shilling, than he could from a novel at 7*s.* 6*d.* The result was that he did not become a buyer of books. The price denied him the pleasure of possession, and if he wanted to read books he had to borrow them from the municipal library or the twopenny-circulating library or from the local branch of Boots'. If his taste was more catholic than that of the detective-story fan, as it very often was, he was in a

still more unfortunate position, for he found that books of a more serious turn were almost invariably dearer than the ephemeral novel, and if he was interested in the fine arts the price of a book on them might easily be more than he earned in a week, or even in a fortnight. Was it worth that to him, was this or any sheaf of printed leaves worth a week's or a whole fortnight's labour? Its message might be—but its message could not be measured in money; what could be measured in that way, the physical book, must seem an inadequate reward for so much sacrifice. Nor was the library always of use to him, for libraries, and particularly country libraries, were limited by their funds and were apt to be slow in buying new books—and when they did arrive there was usually a frenzied scramble for them. And it must be remembered that it is new books we are concerned with here, not reprints or series editions of the classics.

Students form a section of the population to whom books are essential, and students of the fine arts particularly have need of books, not only on their subject, but for the general advance of their education. Few of us were so fortunate as to be flush with money in our student days, for at that time we were still parasitical on the community, and money, when we fell upon it, was apt to be valuable and to have many uses. But how many of us would have bought more books than we did if only we could have afforded them, if only they had been cheaper? The question is rhetorical and needs no answer.

The student is a special class, but the working man is the staple of the population. There are many of him for every member of the upper classes, many, even, for every worker on the higher income levels who can afford to buy books; and nevertheless he is invisible in the publisher's sight. His kind form a potential market, and I believe that it is a highly potential one, that publishers have persistently ignored perhaps because they do not care to take the financial risk

involved in catering for it, or because they have an interest in keeping prices where they are. It was, it seems, impracticable that the prices of books should be reduced until they were within the reach of the ordinary man, for, so I was told, it had been tried on more than one occasion and the response was negligible. It is not true ; for what had been tried, I found, was a cheaply made book, bound in paper or thin card, like a grandiose Penguin. People bought Penguins at sixpence and they buy them at ninepence, but any bookseller will tell you that they will not buy paper-bound books at four shillings. In this country we scarcely regard a paper-bound book as a book at all. When I speak of cheap books I do not mean cheaply made books or shoddy books, but books that are made in every way as we are accustomed to make first editions now or used to make them before the war. I advocate no worsening of the quality of book production, but only a reduction in the price of books to be made possible by larger editions and wider sales.

There are publishers who argue that it is possible to underprice books, and that if you do this they will not sell. That is a convenient argument if you are against reducing prices, and the experience of a publisher might be taken as sufficient authority for it ; but it seems to me that, like many expert opinions on projects that have never been tried, it has no more value than any wild guess coloured by a pre-determined policy. This argument must mean that a would-be purchaser of a book must say to himself : " I would buy this book if its price were fifteen shillings, but as it is only five shillings I won't." That is patently absurd.

The test of the case arrived with the war. Book prices rose comparatively little, a condition due partly to the restraint of publishers, who might have charged famine prices and did not, but mostly due to the blessed exemption from purchase tax. Wages and salaries, on the other hand, rose a good deal, and in spite of the increase of taxation and

the high prices that followed, there began to be more money about than there had ever been in the good old days of peace. The result was that the value of money was reduced for everyone, and book prices, though nominally unchanged, were in fact reduced in the same proportion. Many people who once could not afford to buy books now could afford to do so, or they could buy two where before they could buy only one, and publishers found that where in the days of unlimited labour and material they had experienced difficulty in selling two thousand copies, they now received ten thousand pre-publication subscriptions for books of which the paper ration allowed them to print only two thousand. It was not a little inconvenient ! Some attempt was made to explain this phenomenal demand by reference to war-time conditions, particularly the black-out and disinclination to venture abroad in the evening when raids were expected. It was not a satisfactory explanation, because the demand began and reached its height during the lull after 1940, and was indeed reduced, if anything, during the spasmodic recurrence of attacks ; and an increased demand was noticeable also in districts that have never had air raids of any kind.

This boom noticeably fails to affect books published before the war ; the demand is for *new* books, and many books that do not date, and that would have been sold out within a few days if they had appeared now, remain in stock with the publisher only, it seems because they were published before the war. For example, you may now find it difficult to buy a copy of a collection of poems by a famous poet which was published a few weeks ago, but you can easily buy his previous collection, because it was published in the nineteen thirties and the first edition has not yet been exhausted. This suggests that there is a charm in the mere quality of newness, of up-to-dateness, of topicality if you like (and can avoid thinking that topicality has necessarily

something to do with the war). The public wants books at the time they are issued, and when people talk about them, not five years later, when, though they may have become part of the body of modern English literature, they do not excite quite the same interest.

There is only one way in which the price of books can be reduced, and that is by estimating for and risking from the first a much larger edition—not two thousand, but twenty thousand at least. I believe that in this country alone a public of twenty thousand people can be found for most books, other than the most difficult or specialized, if the price is within their reach. I would be even more daring, and suggest that in a population of more than forty million there are two hundred thousand potential buyers for any book other than the most abstruse. At present, however, a book that reaches the two hundred thousand mark is regarded as a thundering success, as indeed, under present conditions, it must be. Alan Lane and his perpetually pregnant Penguins and Pelicans have shown that there is a demand for even difficult and abstruse reading if it can be placed within the reach of the working man. Penguins are so well within everybody's reach that people buy them and lose them, or give them to salvage, or send them to the nearest hospital or other charity, like magazines. They scarcely treat them as books and keep them, and no book can be made to last at that price. For the publisher a reduced price and a large edition mean greater risk and a larger warehouse and some additional staff, and until now he has preferred to maintain his prices and to appeal mainly to the higher income levels of the population. That phase, I believe, has passed. The result of hugely increased taxation bearing most heavily on the higher incomes, and the rise in the earnings of the working man have brought us all within a narrower range of income than we formerly experienced. When the war ends taxes will not fall to pre-war levels, or perhaps fall at

all ; but wages are likely to be reduced, for it seems to me that employment may be by no means as easy to obtain as the various planners hope, and if this happens many people who have learned to buy books now will no longer be able to do so then if present prices are maintained. (On the other hand, if more books were printed, there would at least be more employment for printers and binders and others concerned in the manufacture of books.) Some publishers have warned us that if the demand falls off the prices of books will be seriously increased—Mr. Wren Howard, in a lecture some months ago, suggested that they would “skyrocket”. It may appear absurd to increase the prices of goods when they do not sell, but that is the way of modern trade.

The publishing trade is looking in the wrong direction : it is the common man on whom they should focus now. Their present policy is the withered fruit of former times ; those “good” old days are gone for good, and we are now in a very bad modern time, out of which, none the less, we hope to build in the future a finer world than there has been before. In that world books must play a very great part, but they cannot play it if they are not made more widely available than they were. If they are not, the loss will not be the public’s only, for the trade too will feel a disadvantage. It must make itself of greater value in the fabric of our society than it has been, and no philanthropy, but an awareness of its own interest, is required from it to achieve this result.

## ON MICHELANGELO'S FRAGMENTARISM

By JOHN URZIDIL

MANY OF MICHELANGELO'S contemporaries and, of course, almost all his later reviewers tried to explain why most of his sculptures, paintings, and works of architecture remained unfinished. It has been stated that neither the time available nor his physical strength, nor the technical means sufficed for carrying out his gigantic plans; that, besides, political events and the personal fate of the artist interfered; others pointed out the multitude of Michelangelo's interests. To quote Vasari: "Michelangelo's imagination was so stupendous that his hands were unable to shape the immense and terrible figures the ideas of which he had conceived in his mind, and that, therefore, he often relinquished his works or rather spoiled many of them; thus, I know that, just before he died, he burned many of his completed drawings, sketches, and cartoons in order that nobody might notice to what effort he had gone and how much he had tested his mind to produce accomplished works only." Elsewhere Vasari remarks that Michelangelo was, in riper years, so little satisfied with himself that he finished only very few statues. The finished ones were made in his youth. As soon as he detected a shortcoming, even though it were immaterial, he abandoned the work and hurried to a new block. Vasari merely describes an obvious attitude without inquiring into its deeper emotional roots. He seems to know only one reason for the fact that the bulk of Michelangelo's works remained unfinished: all too high-flown conception which was beyond his strength, perseverance, and determination as well as his technical possibilities. Nevertheless, Vasari at least does tell of Michelangelo's painful struggles with his ideas and of the presence of conflicts within his artistic conscience.

A certain incompatibility between the magnitude of a

project such as the Tomb of Pope Julius and the possibilities of a genius, even one like Michelangelo's, may be admitted. This, however, would not account for the unfinished state of so many individual works which did not make unanswerable demands upon the bodily and technical abilities of the artist. It would even not do to hold responsible Michelangelo's unsteadiness, which has often been quoted. That word does not explain anything; the task is to descend to the deep roots of his aberrations which grew to be his second nature, and to ask for the reasons for his planning works of unattainable immensity.

Goethe who called Beethoven's music "terrifying", had a similar impression of Michelangelo. The artist's contemporaries had the same feeling, and so have we. Julius II called Michelangelo "terribile"; Sebastiano del Piombo wrote him (on 27th October, 1520), "Everybody is frightened at you, even Popes." It is always the unexplained and the inexplicable in a phenomenon that causes terror. That which is explained and explicable does not induce awe. It is the inaccessible isolation that makes Michelangelo "terribile". It is his being separated from us by unbridgable abysses, by mystic empty spaces, his not condescending to an intimate dialogue with us. Inexplicability of a phenomenon, however, is merely one's ignorance of its reasons and origin. "The beginning of all knowledge is wonder (*Thauma*)," said Aristotle. We may add that the substance of all wonder is fear. It is recognition that eliminates fear. Furthermore, it may be stated that every terrifying creation of human origin confers upon us only the terror with or through which it was produced by its author. It is Michelangelo's own creative awe and terror that makes us tremble.

Michelangelo was not a handsome man; he was even ugly. He had a certain inclination to abnormalities which



expressed itself in his type of sexuality and, of course, in the bodily character of his most significant works. His father suffered from internal unrest and from persecution mania. As a child, Michelangelo was very often brutally beaten by his father and his brothers. According to authentic reports (Vasari, Condivi, Paolo Giovio, Benvenuto Cellini, Benedetto Varchi, Sebastiano del Piombo) one can establish the following characteristics of him: panic-stricken fear reaching occasionally the state of cowardice; hypochondria; pessimism; distrust; quarrelsomeness, especially with artists; nagging at domestics; parsimony and fear of pecuniary losses notwithstanding, however, a kind of generous charity; masochistic self-vexation; religious mysticism without real piety; attacks of a cynical and burlesque humour; tragical self-irony.

His soul was pre-eminently bent upon thoughts of death and immortality, the latter being but a secondary form of the fear of death. His poems are highly illuminating in this respect. Some lines he wrote about his father are significant:—

“ ’Twas death alone to you did death impart  
But in this world of grief I’m kept alive  
And stay I must though death dwell in my heart.”

This is the overpowering *Tedium Vitæ* of the creative mind which is conscious of the great death everybody carries in him (Rilke: “Der grosse Tod, den jeder in sich trägt”), it is the intensified world-weariness of the eternal adolescent, the sources of which undoubtedly flow from certain unfulfilled propensities. No artist’s works were ever born from pain as much as those of Michelangelo, master of the Pietas and tombs, whose statues and paintings do not know any smile, neither Leonardo’s transcendental and enchanted, nor, still less, the frank and unchecked of Raphael’s figures. Furthermore, Michelangelo’s purely anthropocentric world appears so much concerned with its own grievances and

problems that it lacks even the slightest hint of scenery. Scenery is generalization. Man amidst scenery makes for equalization of the two values or, at least, for balance, or assimilation and counterpoise. Michelangelo, however, does not know anything but Man, and of man he prefers to shape the superhuman type which, being transferred to this earth, necessarily has to remain a torso in order to exist at all. Jakob Burckhardt used the formula : " Not raised humanity but quenched monstrosity." Thus Michelangelo expresses his own real character in complying with Socrates' famous precept for the sculptor to show " the deeds of the soul ".

His sculptures are neither creations of his own mere imagination nor are they determined by myths, although the latter seems to be the case as far as the subject is concerned. In reality they are solely symbols, similes of his sweeping melancholy, of his isolation from the world or, to be exact, of his isolaphobia, his morbid dread of being alone. In this connection his nude figures might have a particular meaning. The passionate exhibition of the body constitutes a vehement breaking through the unbearable isolation, an excessive yielding of himself to the public. Nudity, rules his work. Because of this nudity Michelangelo was reproached with being a pagan. He certainly was, and he harboured no hypocrisy. Even the sacred subject of his four Pietas incited him to play voluptuously with the motif of dramatic nudity. You look in vain for Christian reverence of God in those dead and tortured bodies. To the great indignation of all bigoted and prejudiced people and, of course, no less to the vexation of all the really pious, he also showed the Saviour naked elsewhere : as a marble statue in striking similarity to his Bacchus ; as a threatening pagan demon in the Last Judgment of the Sixtina. Buckhardt remarked once of Michelangelo : " With such an attitude one should not paint Holy Families." And he was right. Nor should one

try to paint entombments like the unfinished one in the National Gallery, where the whole scene reminds one of a joyous ballet performed around a graceful naked corpse.

No symbol can be presented by using merely the customary yardstick. Thus, not only in the Sixtina where the conditions of space and of the fresco-style afforded some reason for exaggerated proportions and deformations, but elsewhere, too, Michelangelo overstretches the dimensions. Usually the sculptures of "Day" and "Night" are interpreted as "Life" and "Death", those of "Dawn" and "Dusk" as "Welcome" and "Farewell". Nevertheless, whatever they may symbolize, precisely because of their symbolic intention, Michelangelo had to transgress the conventional bodily proportions. He did so furiously by transporting the whole muscular system into a violent symphonic rage. The first biological stages of sensual emotion are rendered in the oversized David as well as in the sleeping Slave who seems to dream of stripping his ties, and in the limp attitude of the drunken androgynous Bacchus which is similar to that of the Slave. The various unfinished marbles of Slaves represent not only a revolt against overpowering tyrannical matter, but also a certain gloomy pleasure in showing twisted and strained corpses. It is obvious how remote all this is from the art of ancient Greece. As to the "Last Judgment", one has to agree with Mackowsky's statement that Michelangelo "attempted to purge himself of his own experience of horror and to submit himself to punishment". The same applies to most of his other works. This desire for self-punishment obviously arose from his feeling that he himself was a kind of culprit because of his vehement inversion.

The element of the perforating intellect is one of the chief reasons of fragmentarism. Michelangelo's unconscious

emotionality was allowed to develop fully in the Sixtina frescoes because of the fact that painting was not his main artistic intention. In sculpture, architecture, and in poetry, however, intellectual elements exercised their disturbative control. It must be said that this symptom is found not only in Michelangelo. It was one of the signs of disintegration to which the whole European mind had been surrendering by degrees since the decline of the gothic spiritual unity. In the case of Michelangelo, moreover, the fight of contending Hebrew, Christian, and Greco-Roman elements reached the climax. Formally, his struggle for three-dimensionality, and against the imperious claims of frontality in sculpture, signifies the fight for the gaining of a new unity and totality of mind. In some of his remarkable verses he calls wisdom and intellect bluntly the formative powers of art, but at the same time he strikingly demonstrates that intellectual interpolations, by being restrictive and cumbersome, are dangerous.

“To doubtful searching many years are lent :  
The wise man's life is filled with hard  
Pursuance of pure art  
To shape the living marble ; but the course  
Of life is almost spent  
When he attains to undreamt noble force.”

There was no wavering and searching when he created the Sixtina frescoes.

No unfinished works of fine art are known from classical antiquity. Antique torsi came into existence by mutilations caused by later catastrophies. No Greek sculptor, however, as far as we know, created a fragmentary piece. In classical antiquity the artist's mind was focused on the present. Intellectual interpolations, perforating the creative process, are primarily concerned with the past. If such an interpolation occurs, if the present is pierced by the past, the result must be fragmentarism. In creating the form, the un-

conscious dynamics produce their appropriate artistic symbols. Form, in other words, constitutes the primary publicity of amorphous emotions. In this way it establishes the first step towards the ethicizing of dark feelings and indefinite sentiments. The synthesis of those feelings and sentiments may be called faith, and it is faith from which alone the finished work of art can ever result. Intellect and recognition, on the other hand, cause scepticism and atomization of faith, thus, disintegrating the form, even whilst it is being created, they bring about fragmentarism. Where versatility and universalism are at work, it is not the multitude of the endeavours but the multitude of recognitions that endangers completion.

Although we stated that Michelangelo's Sixtina frescoes were completed we have to use a psychological corrective in order to be exact. True, they are technically finished, but they are, at the same time, overperfected; they transgress, in fact, the limits of painting and, thus, they belong psychologically to the same category as do his unfinished works. He broke through the bounds of painting because of his sculptural and architectural recognitions and, *vice versa*, the same holds true of both his other arts because of recognitions acquired in another artistic sphere. In fresco painting Michelangelo quickened his tempo, the space offered him free opportunity of an excessive scope which he used without hesitating, whereas the subjects of sculpture are bound by certain material restrictions and laws which no one can disobey without risking fragmentarism. Burckhardt is undoubtedly mistaken in attributing Michelangelo's fragmentarism to the fact that "the internal struggle came to an end and the artist's interest in the work was lost", or to the fact that the later development of Michelangelo's work disagreed with the original ideas of his first artistic impetus. In addition to the biological reasons set forth above the formative power of faith was frustrated by the intrusion

of the intellect. Therefore, although Michelangelo was already in his lifetime considered as the greatest artist, it is readily understandable that he later became a source of disorientation to all other artists. For none of them could reproduce in himself Michelangelo's specific emotional subjectivism which only a titanic formative language was able to sublimate into an effective symbol. None of them suffered the complicated internal struggles between faith and scepticism, between the unconscious and recognition.

For a better understanding of Michelangelo's fragmentarism it is advisable to inquire a little into the case of Leonardo. Leonardo, as far as we know, conceived his ideas first from a thorough observation of natural phenomena, then he formed his theory on a certain subject, then, in order to examine its correctness and usefulness, he transposed that theory into practical experiment; thereafter, however, he always re-entered the sphere of abstraction and, later, of observation, only to reapply himself after a time to reality again. This oscillation is typical not only of the way in which he made his great scientific inventions, but also of the way in which he created the wonderworks of his art which likewise depended on the alternating current of theory and empiricism. (Vasari tells us that Pope Leo X was annoyed because Leonardo started his portrait by preparing the varnish which actually is applied to a picture only after it has been finished.)

Some of Leonardo's contemporaries tried to explain his fragmentarism solely by the simple fact of the multiplicity of his undertakings, his delight in experiments, his universalism. But the "Anonimo Fiorentino" stresses that Leonardo never felt that he lived up to his standard and that his great knowledge of errors impeded him. A conspicuous statement by Vasari reads that "only grudge could suppose Leonardo to have planned works of an excessive size

purposely, in order to make their completion impossible". It would seem that this grudge was not entirely blind. Furthermore, Leonardo himself points out occasionally the restrictive influence of recognition upon the creating of works of art. "O painter-anatomist, beware of being turned into a wooden painter by too much knowledge about bones, sinews, and muscles." To the art of painting which he placed "amidst the philosophy of nature" he assigns, on the other hand, philosophical and subtle contemplation.

Vasari reports that young Leonardo was a fickle problem child, interested in many things simultaneously which he abandoned having scarcely started them. Leonardo's own notations prove that behind this unsteadiness there was hidden some prime panic which throughout his life he attempted to overcome by doing his utmost to master the whole universe in all its appearances. "I am busy for a lifetime," he wrote to the architects of the Piacenza cathedral. "I have so much, so much to do that I shall never be able to finish it all." His notebooks contain many descriptions of horror, visions of formidable battles, of deluges, terrifying last judgments, of the frightfulness of the sea, and the appalling catastrophies of volcanic eruptions. Again and again in his essays and letters he indulges in apocalyptic daydreams. His predilection resulted in his searching eagerly for human grimaces; in this respect his sketches of grotesque caricatures are significant. This entire attitude reveals his tendency to control the despotism of fear, to conquer those horrible abnormalities, to master the panic or chaos by killing it through cognition and by rendering the secure lawfulness of Nature. That which is frightful is to be comprehended and organized as parts of the grandiose world order.

Leonardo's efforts to convert chaos into equilibrium saved him from the abyss of depression whereas Michel-

angelo remained a tragic character, always on the verge of implacable melancholy. Leonardo, at least, allows his creations to smile at him. He was a master portraitist. And, as every portrait, more than any other work of art, is only a self-likeness and, therefore, a mitigating and relaxing confession, it is at the same time the wishful dream which furnishes the artist's *Ego*, with some desired attributes. Michelangelo, in contrast, in spite of being purely anthropocentric, lacked this kind of liberating emotion. His "portraits" are not portraits but indistinctive symbols (Brutus, Lorenzo, and Giuliano Medici) like most of the portraits of classical antiquity. Leonardo had a deep relationship to the scenery of Nature. As a scientist he studied landscape and as an artist he discovered in it an immutable balance established from above. Michelangelo lacked this comfort absolutely. The agonies which he suffered from his own fragmentarism caused him to deride Leonardo, curiously enough, for leaving his Sforza Monument unfinished, thus rebuking merely himself. On the other hand, to Michelangelo's great vexation, Leonardo expressed the opinion that the spiritual value of painting was superior to that of sculpture and poetry. Thus Leonardo vindicated his own particular endowments. To Michelangelo sculpture meant his specific creative struggle with matter as opposed to spirit. Hidden in the amorphous material was the predetermined work of art, the substantiation of which the artist had to enforce. He avoided forming bronze figures, which are essentially related to painting. Bronzes, preceded by their clay models, originate by the artist's adding something, similarly to paintings; whereas sculptures originate by taking away; the art of sculpture is, thus, a struggle with the given matter and its performance an exceptionally moral though, indeed, a painful action. Michelangelo's fragmentarism was caused by "taking away" either too much or not enough. Why



did this happen? Because of fear, which always is only fear of death. Because of recognition that always breaks the unaffected flow of the creative process.

Leonardo's effort to attain to universality and in this manner to fight the spiritual chaos leads to fragmentarism, too. However, it also sets up a synthetic principle, the belief in transcendental unity and equilibrium. Leonardo, therefore, in spite of conspicuous early mental inconsistencies (analysed by Sigmund Freud), is less depressive than Michelangelo. No radiation to all fields of humane research, science, and technique dispersed the tremendous tension of Michelangelo's mind. No relationship to Nature and landscape offered him the desired counterpoise. No centre of gravity unified his inherent psychophysical anarchy. He was bound to escape into stupendous one-sided conceptions. Thus he grew to be the genius of unfinished masterworks.

## POETRY

### MEMORIES

*(Translated from Hoelderlin)*

THE NORTH-EAST BLOWS,  
The dearest among the winds  
To me, because of the fiery spirit  
It promises, bearing good voyage to the sailors.  
But go now and greet  
The beautiful Garonne  
And the gardens of Bordeaux  
There where along the precipitous bank  
The pathway runs, and into the river  
The brook plunges ; but over against it  
Watches forever a noble pair  
Of oaks and silver-poplars ;  
Still it comes back to me well, and how  
The elm-forest, inclining, sways  
The widespread summits above the mill ;  
In the courtyard, meanwhile, a fig-tree grows.  
There it is that on feast-days go  
The swarthy women  
Upon silken ground,  
At the time of March  
When night is equal with day,  
And over slow passes,  
Heavy with golden dreams,  
Drift wild airs bringing sleep.

But let one hand me,  
Full of the dark light,  
The fragrant cup,  
That I might rest ; for sweet  
Sleep would be, under shadows.

It is not good  
Soulless to be, with mortal  
Thoughts. Yet good  
Is converse, and to say  
The heart's meaning, to hear much  
Of days of love,  
And events, the doing of deeds.

But where are the friends? Bellarmin  
With the companion? Many a one  
Bears shyness, timid to go to the source;  
The beginning of riches is truly  
In the sea. They, the seafarers,  
Like painters, assemble  
The beautiful of the Earth, and do not disdain  
Winged war, and suffer  
To live alone, year-long, under  
The leafless mast, where the night is not lit up  
With the glow-lamps of the town's feast-days,  
Nor the playing of strings nor innate dancing.

But now to Indians  
The men are gone;  
Deserted is the airy peak  
On mountains of vines from which the descending  
Dordogne comes,  
And together with the magnificent  
Garonne, great as a sea,  
The river goes out. The sea, though,  
Takes and gives recollection,  
And love, too, fixes the eyes intently.  
What endures, however, poets create.

VERNON WATKINS

## MR. SUCQUIN IN CAESAREA

*(for Priscilla)*

THE TALLNESS OF the larches strikes my heart  
With sudden fear. What am I doing here  
Among these pointed tops and ragged cones ?  
It seems indecent that the spring should start  
And find these trees already clothed, the lines  
Of needle-leaves sharp in the atmosphere.

But some have always had their weapons ready.  
I wander at a loss among these spears,  
My heart unsteady. Why should it be so ?  
Some seem to have command of every body ;  
The girls go down before them soft as snow ;  
All is as easy as the drifting years.

- These ones seem elemental. They are winners  
Of wars and women, and their triumphs mean  
But little to them. When they have a thing,  
They soon forget it ; and they show beginners  
Of similar character how to be strong  
In the same corrupt and aimless discipline.

While I, no less an elemental man,  
Progress with difficulty, and prefer  
More permanent emotions : if I teach  
Others my way of life, it is no plan  
I put before them. I can hope to preach  
No easy panacea, no quick war.

No fear is settled by such victories.  
The enemy is subtler. All these arms  
So bravely worn, so easily acquired,

Are enviable : yet one rarely sees  
Permanent happiness accrue—desired  
Perhaps, but lost in all the war's alarms.

I would prefer to note the winter and  
Expose my naked heart against its hurt.  
Better to face the fear than try to kill  
An enemy one does not understand.  
Such easy strife evades the quickening will  
And finally destroys the neglected heart.

For, surely, the heart must know itself or die?  
There is no other way. The clothed-in-pride  
Are gay of feature, yet are terribly  
Empty of purpose : they must always try  
To seek new victories, since memory  
Alone remains, the never-satisfied.

O I would have a permanent land in view  
And always work to make my life complete  
With permanent satisfactions ! There is no  
Particular virtue in craving for the new  
And unknown always. There is nothing so  
Impenetrable as honesty of heart.

Difficult, yes, to remain an honest man,  
But why should I be frightened ? Better to be  
Honest and suffer than to live a life  
Of gay deception ; for the world they win  
Is not enough, never will be enough.  
My world, once won, would be enough for me.

NICHOLAS MOORE

*May, 1944.*

FOR JACQUES ALBALA, KILLED IN  
FRANCE, JUNE, 1944

To DIE TOO early has been love's device  
from the beginning ;  
and many of the young have made themselves heroic  
by a sudden exit,  
using no other means than quickness or left-handed joke.

That was the trick ! to throw  
a light so briefly, straight into the eye,  
it dazzled.  
Or to hoist, above the shoulders of the crowd,  
murdered significance, its head upon a pike ;  
and so to have the curtain tumble,  
leaving us in the dark  
to wring our hands and to believe  
it could have gone like that for ever.

Or so we were supposed to think ;  
perhaps we've also had our telling lines  
and know what they are worth.  
Anyway the bold survivors gradually lose  
their trickiness, their heat, that crop of light  
that was hair rising from their scalp, the jumping flames  
that ringed their scribbled gestures with loose gold.  
The thundery pressure is withdrawn.  
They cease to care.

But there are others, look, a few hundreds in this damaged  
room  
that we still occupy, between the candle's brown flame and  
the rusted grate,  
unmindful of the earthworm and the dandelion's advance.  
These are men who lock themselves at home,

who sit at nightfall, here,  
their hands between their knees,  
big shadows standing one behind each chair,  
while all their darkening love spreads out like blood upon  
the floor.

They do not need to keep the bargain with  
their bodies' non-committal act,  
since they are growing in stature equal to their shadows  
and no longer feel the cold.

Larger than life, in every century, there are such,  
their faces withering off their bones,  
their eyes a splash of rain, a pool in haggard roads.

EITHNE WILKINS

## THE LITTLE ROOM

By WILLIAM SANSOM

THE NUN MARGHERITA was escorted with ceremony to the threshold of her new little room without windows ; but there the Mother Superior and her sisters excused themselves and left Margherita alone with the five appointed artisans, who then immediately proceeded with their duties.

While three of these women artisans busied themselves with lengths of plastic boarding—these looked almost like boards of asbestos into which hairs and husk had been mixed—the other two artisans erected a firm brass guard over the manometer already cemented into one of the inner walls. Thus the three women occupied with the boarding acted as an impromptu guard over the threshold, while those within were able at any moment to glance up from their work and observe at close range any dilatory move on Margherita's part.

But Margherita had removed herself quietly to the side of the bed and seemed simply content to sit there and view at her leisure the equipment of her new room, which, of course, she had never seen before.

However, it differed little from all the other rooms in the convent. The walls were distempered a pale green, the polished linoleum reflected the same colour. There was little furniture ; only her bed, a simple affair of polished walnut with a green silk coverlet, a small prie-dieu upholstered in similar materials, and a table ; a miniature electric fire stood in one corner ; but otherwise the room was bare, appearing thus with its shining surfaces immaculately clean, orderly, but unvisited. There hung about it an air of melancholy, the same that breeds in the deadly clean gleam of all those small suburban parlours, touched but unvisited, that day after day wait, dying of the afternoon light, for the good rustle of dust, or for a book to be



thrown across their immaculate monotony. But of course no such afternoon light ever penetrated into Margherita's room, for there were no windows through which it might enter. Only in this way did the room differ from all other rooms; but that is enough, for the character of a room is conditioned as much by the angles of light diffused upon it as by any other decoration. Margherita's new room had no windows, then—but it was illuminated by concealed bars of bluish white electric light that cast upon the room what approximated an afternoon light, colourless, and originating from no definite source, perhaps thus even the more monotonous, for its very essence was artificial. This light illuminated with unwavering severity a bowl of large white daisies that the Mother Superior had placed by the prie-dieu as a gesture of her personal impartiality.

Up to this time Margherita had comported herself with commendably calm reserve. Such very placid behaviour might have been mistaken for complacency—but Margherita was in no way indifferent, she knew her position, and now she regarded the busy movements of the artisans with interest. Perhaps it was the very presence of these other women that enabled her to maintain a tranquil attitude towards such fatal proceedings.

Margherita was in process of being walled up. In a very few minutes the final boards would be nailed into place, and she would then be abandoned forever to herself and her little airless cell. Then there would be many hours in which she could repent her sin. She had been sentenced for "the usual"—of which in fact she had been guilty on more than one occasion—and now it only remained for her to undergo the "prescribed treatment". For the moment, though, these artisans supplied her with feelings of company, it was difficult indeed to imagine life without people when these artisans were working around. Otherwise Margherita accepted as inevitable the process of

her sentence—it was traditional and usual, she would never have dreamed of criticizing so venerable and deeply rooted a custom. If unpleasant things are expected, they are easier to accept—the more so if they are not to be accepted in the very next instant.

The three women on the threshold had almost completed the fourth wall. They handled the light partitioning material with fluent ease; wielding their hammers and needles without effort, with the careless surety of workers skilled with their tools. They hammered the partitions together, sealing each socket with a nail, while along the floor they stitched deep into the carpet and on the ceiling deep into the tapestried frieze to ensure absolutely the exclusion from the room of all air. And at last, when only a narrow slit remained, they paused leaning against the new partition and chatting, for it was impossible to affix the final board until the other artisans inside had finished work on the manometer.

This instrument, of which only the dial showed, was already inset firmly into the wall. But since its function was to register the decline of oxygen in the atmosphere and since thus its slow needle would demonstrate to Margherita the speed of the approach of her suffocation, tempting her at some critical moment to injure the instrument in the belief, perhaps, that it was the agent of death rather than its mentor—for such reasons it was the custom to affix over the dial an outer trellice of brass wire as a shield against interfering hands. At all costs the manometer must be preserved—it was a refinement that was traditionally indispensable. How other wisecould the confined person be assured of a proper appreciation of the truth of her death? How could she grasp the full significances of her declining hours? For instance, without the exact message of the manometer, she might swoon prematurely, thus dying unnaturally early, or an optimism inherent in her character might decry the possibility of death, postponing in the strength of that

belief even physical atrophies and thus protracting death artificially. In either case the dying would have been robbed of its natural proportion, and this was opposed to the convent's philosophy. At all costs matters must take their allotted course. There must be no artificial stimulation, no short cuts, no illusions whatsoever—real experience according to the laws of nature afforded the prime base upon which all matters, including the suffocation-confinement, must be ordered.

Of course, it had been argued that illusions were illusions according to natural laws—after all as themselves the illusions they occurred within the machinery of natural minds, they did not occur anywhere else—but nevertheless the highest intendants clung to the conception of an arbitrary norm which they styled as the real experience of a majority. Yet—came the constant complaint—now could any majority be proved more real than its minority? People on the sliding scale between the flesh and the spirit were difficult units with which to deal—there might be more of one sort but was it the right sort? What was the evaluation of a “real” person. There might, for instance, be a majority of units far too fleshy—but this majority though convincingly numerous might also be convincingly sub-real? In a ceaselessly changing world among ceaselessly changing inhabitants, who was real, at what stage, now? Glib answerers maintained easily that there was no change, that the old world was the same and that human nature never, never changed. And that was the kind of answer given by the intendants, who, at this stage of their doctrine, smiled with pitying distaste at their interlocuters, raised their white eyebrows and sucked at their hollowed cheeks, invoking then such ready panaceas as “common sense” or even—could this veil a conspiratorial return to the flesh?—“horse” sense.

However, such problems did not concern Margherita as

she watched the artisans finally stand away from their task and then survey the fitment with satisfaction. They turned to Margherita with smiles, as though wishing to be congratulated on their skill, and for her part Margherita thanked them, nodding her approval and smiling into their faces. For some minutes the three of them chatted about the manometer; then the artisans began to wander about the room, fingering the bed and the walls awkwardly, now quite plainly worried as to how they might take their leave. Margherita, too, found their company increasingly irksome—there was an emptiness now in their relations with her, almost as though they had left her already. No longer had the three of them a mutual interest. The only subject of meaning to all of them, the manometer, had been exhausted. The atmosphere became really embarrassing, so that Margherita felt almost glad when the three artisans in the corridor began to yawn very loudly, and finally to summon the two inside, complaining that there were many other duties to perform, that valuable working hours were being lost.

The two inside leapt at this chance, they jostled each other in their haste to bid Margherita farewell. In a few seconds they had disappeared through the remaining slit in the wall. Margherita was relieved to see them go. Only when the final board was being nailed into place did she raise one hand towards them in a slight gesture of restraint. Then she wanted the two artisans back. But then it was too late. She was alone.

For some minutes she stood in the centre of the room, slowly tasting the new silence, the breathless silence, and the first sensations of being quite alone. The four walls, the floor, the ceiling—in fact six walls and their eight immaculate corners. Her eyes slowly roved these surfaces, one by one, and then suddenly she realized their similarity—there was no opening whatsoever, no familiar shut door,

no window frame, only the plain unrelieved walls. It seemed impossible, no place could be like this. Perhaps there was a door behind her? Her senses told her there must be a door. She spun round—to face a wall. The door was eluding her, it contrived to exist behind her all the time! But spin as she might the door was too clever—it disappeared every time, just in time! Once she thought she had caught it in the corner of her eye, a misted rectangle just fading, like a shadow left on the eyes by a strong light. Several times she pretended to turn one way, then suddenly spun round in exactly the opposite direction. She tried even to disguise her thoughts, as if the omniscient door could read her mind. But every tactic proved useless—the door was too clever by half!

Then she looked up at the concealed channels from which the light came—it seemed to her that the fanning of this light might be heard. She strained her ears. Yes—a buzzing, a slight continuous whirring! For a moment her striving senses brought this companionable sound, but as her hearing relaxed so the noise faded, there had been no noise after all, nothing there but silence, a silent light, motionless, painted.

She shrugged her shoulders. The room was impassive. Nothing moved, it projected no character whatsoever. It was bare, yet compact. It gave no sign of warmth, but was not cold. It echoed no sounds, nor did it consume sound. Whatever happened in that room happened by itself without the aid of the room, against a neutral background that neither projected nor absorbed. Margherita walked over to the bed and sat down. Her footsteps clattered on the linoleum an exact sound, unechoed, unmuffled. She rested her head on her hands and stared at the floor. What was there to do?

Yet the room without character seemed nevertheless to be alive, to contain invisible and inaudible motions, as if

its function were to hide things going on just outside its walls. It radiated the impassive energy of a surgeon's waiting room with its connecting door shut and watchful; it was like the interior of a large refrigerator, where there was no actual movement but the sensation, almost perceptible, of ice forming somewhere behind the walls, perhaps within the walls themselves. Of course, there lay also about this room a strong foretaste of doom—that was only natural, and Margherita felt it herself, though as yet she had not been moved by any deep apprehensions, remaining so far resigned beneath the weight of inevitable traditions. For all their massive ponderance, traditions such as these impose themselves gracefully, their approach is foreseen, they come slowly, with no sudden shock, with the footless tread of encroaching lava.

She rose from the bed and went over to the manometer. Through its brass screen the dial could be seen distinctly, its needle steadily pointing to a number, never quavering, encircled steadily by imperturbable spikes of enumeration that, of course, never moved. This girdle of numbers, some red, some black, lay engraved and meaningless. The units rose in hundreds, their many "0's" and the enormous aggregate signified nothing to an imagination accustomed to count in simple threes and fours. These figures were vacuous, inestimable. If they expressed anything to Margherita, they expressed only an infinite plenty—thousands of "0's" to go before anything could happen, thousands of pounds of oxygen to eat, hundreds of cubic hours to pass. Margherita turned away from this impossible instrument, walked over to the electric fire, switched it on, careless that the ravenous little filament would squander her oxygen, careless with her wealth of hours.

Many years had passed since Margherita's novitiate, she was quite accustomed to solitary confinement. The idea of loneliness held no terrors for her. She went to the prie-dieu

and on her knees addressed a prayer to the organization in which she believed. Presently she rose and went again to the bed. There she sat in contemplation. The glowing filament burnt at her air, a quiet and hungry bar of vermilion silently murdering her. But Margherita hardly thought of this acceleration; really she had not yet appreciated that she was about to die. She had often considered death, but never her own. She could never imagine her own death, in fact she had never tried—the idea was inconceivable. Even now there was no startling evidence to direct her thoughts. She was whole, healthy, fed, warm, breathing. Her hands were still hands, they told her beads, each finger was as sensitive as ever; her body filled the inside of her, she felt the usual pains in her left shoulder and a cramping discomfort down on the left of her back; her mouth felt pleasantly fresh, her eyes a little tired; this was her body as she had known and felt it inside her every day. The idea of its disintegration simply could not occur to her. Despite the disciplines of humility, an animal self-confidence assured her of life; her entity lived; and since its function was to live it could not consider itself dead, nor would it be capable of beginning to think in so negative a direction. Certainly these present surroundings implied death to her thinking brain. But here also she was deluded, for the tradition and its ceremonial had outpaced its truth, so that now only the idea was true.

Nevertheless after some hours Margherita became restless. She had meditated but had not been able to lose herself in meditation. This was ordinarily a difficult exercise, but to-day the power eluded her altogether. Something distracted her. Perhaps something in the room? But why, she thought, should this pleasant little room prove so distracting—it was like all the other little rooms in the building? Yet unlike the others this room disturbed her. Then she realized—it was of course the absence of windows.

She thought: "Alone in my ordinary cell, however absorbed I become in my meditations, I am always accompanied in some measure by the presence of the window. A little square of sky, a little square of the infinite." (But there was more to it than that. There were the small shadows, for instance, that surround all windows—the shadow just above the top frame, where in all the room the shade seems deepest, and again beneath the sill where it is really deeper, for the floor reflects no light. Windows and doors are deeply impressed in the child's first consciousness; they are the exits to mysterious regions, the entrances through which the first shapes of terror may approach, the first images of love. They are more than doors and windows, they are rectangles of infinite drama, mystery, and hope. They remain forever so. Like all the first familiarities of the lair, they remain forever a mental comfort; one should never move far away from these facts perceived in the first moments.)

Margherita stared with greater curiosity at the green dis-temper surrounding her. She saw this closed expanse for the first time windowless. The first feelings of uneasiness disturbed her, so that still seated in an attitude of meditation her eyes glanced quickly from one side to the other, urgently revealing their whites, her eyes moved but her head remained still. Deprived of meditation, the full vacuum of these enclosed hours revealed itself to her. This artifice for solace had crumbled, she did not know how else to occupy herself, she had no further means. Loneliness descended and, thrown open against herself, she looked down at her monotonous empty hands and at her feet without direction. She could see, as if they were plainly laid out in layers, the hours that remained for her in the little room—an endless staircase of hours, not descending, as in reality they must, but instead ascending. She could see the stretch of these hours but never the limit. Because they had really to be



experienced now, minute by minute, they appeared endless ; outside the room, thinking of another in her position, she would plainly have seen the limit, she could have contracted the period into a reasonable perspective for criticism. But now she was the subject, the hours had no clear ending, indeed life itself seemed monotonously long.

Then, strangely, this very idea that life was endless provided it with an ending. By "endless" she had really meant "of immeasurable length". But by virtue of not being able to measure the tedium, and thus endowing it with a proportion, though of a length unendurable, she had really now envisaged an absolute length—and a length must have an end. So for the first time she saw the possibility of an end to life. Perhaps, appalled by the great staircase of hours, she began to hope for an end, and her wish enabled her to feel it quite clearly—so clearly that, if those misted hours had really formed a staircase, she might have seen the fringe of the topmost carpet, the brass rods, the level space of the landing. But the hours were not of carpet ; they were a misted succession of grey apprehensions formed sometimes into the letters of the word "hours", sometimes with no form but only weight, and so the final hour could never be seen but only perhaps felt ; she was still defeated by the appearance of the final hour, death was still inconceivable.

Yet . . . she had felt the idea of death, if not of her own death. She could think of death on the one hand and of herself on the other, and know that these two ideas were related, although perhaps she could see no form to the link. And so, sitting on the green bed, her hands still clasped, in the lonely room where nothing moved, not even the heat, not even the light, where everything was quite still, where she alone could be heard to move and the rustle of her gown sounded deadly exact and solitary—there Margherita began to pity herself. She could say to herself : "I am to

die." And now, in a remote way, to feel this, to regret it as the first unshed tears began to swell below her throat. She felt suddenly small, neglected, abandoned by those she had known and the environment that had nourished her. She had been left alone ! Not one of her sisters cared, perhaps they had even ceased to think of her. She crossed the linoleum to the prie-dieu and tried again to pray. But " I am to die ", she thought.

All through her prayers she felt the weight of death. " This person, this ' me ' that I am, this familiarity of hands and memories and close wishes and dry disgusts, this well-shaped shadow lying about my inner thoughts—all this is going to die. It will cease to be. There will be nothing more of it. Then she thought through the words and the half removal of herself in prayer : " It cannot be ? " And then : " But what of God ? Where will God be if this ' me ' ceased to pray here beneath him ? I feel Him in my prayer, it is in my thoughts that He takes a shape. If, then, there is no me to feel Him . . . ? "

Many hours later she crossed herself and rose. Her mind had grown drowsy, the air before her eyes had become confused and thick. Perhaps a glass of water ? She went to the bed and looked for the jug. There was bread laid out—but where . . . ? They had forgotten to leave her a jug. That was too bad ! To think that they had forgotten such a vital detail of ceremony ! Such casual behaviour belittled the ceremony. Could the ceremony have been as important as she had imagined ? Perhaps they had not thought it worth while to devote their energies to the ceremony, perhaps they considered other matters of greater importance, perhaps they were impatient for other things. It might be that even now one of them—perhaps the Mother Superior herself—had remembered the jug and had personally questioned one of the artisans ; yet even if the artisan had answered truthfully, which was to be doubted

under the circumstances, then it was probable that the Mother Superior had nevertheless dismissed the question of the jug from her mind at the first opportunity. It was plain that her old companions had no further interest in her, their thoughts had skipped easily away to other matters. She, Margherita, was finished with. They had even hurried the ceremony of finishing her, so that an important detail had been neglected, and this showed that Margherita had been forgotten even before they had gone. How thoughtless these people were, how treacherous their affections !

Margherita felt this neglect deeply. Now that the ceremony had been exposed as unimportant, it seemed equally unimportant that she should die. It seemed now to be a mistake, and without point. All her efforts were to be of no purpose, she would die unseen, unheard, unfelt for, even unremembered. Hopelessly she took up the bowlful of daisies and drank the bitter yellow water from among the stalks, several of which fell untidily across her face as she drank.

She replaced the bowl and her eyes remembered the manometer. She hurried quickly clicking over the linoleum and peered through the brass shield.

She gasped—with surprise, with shock, with fear, and then for the first time for breath itself. The manometer needle had advanced to within only ten units of the blue-starred danger mark ! Soundlessly, with no show, no hesitant jerk, slowly it had revolved on its inexorable sweep, sweeping down the units with its remorseless steel stick. ‘ If it would quiver ! ’ Margherita thought. ‘ But it’s steady, steady as the hand on one of those electric clocks. You can’t see it move,’ she whispered, the words chasing themselves fearfully, ‘ yet it moves ; you can feel the time shortening ; but from minute to minute you can’t see how short it is ; for as soon as you fix on a minute it has gone ; the hand has already approached some seconds further on.’

She put her fingers to her face, scrambling at her features, as if she needed in some way the reassurance of their shape. "And what happens? Does the speed increase? Still imperceptibly, but nevertheless increase? Does the pressure rise at a compound speed?"

Her hand on her face came away wet, as streaming wet as if she had stroked a rain-spotted windowpane. She gasped for breath. Then, trying to concentrate, she took carefully exercised long breaths and paused in between these with her lungs empty. She seemed to be breathing not air but weight. It was so heavy to breathe, it took a pull—she perspired with lack of breath. Then, suddenly agile, like a cat wide-awakedly springing from half-sleep, she whisked her arms at the cord of the electric fire—the plug snapped out and rolled on the linoleum with an empty clatter. To have left on that bar biting through the precious minutes of her oxygen! She stared down at the plug, panting, her hands with their white scrubbed knuckles clenching and unclenching.

Why had she attacked the cord so savagely? Because the air in the little room had grown hot, uncomfortably hot? Because the needle's advance had thrust her suddenly far up her staircase of hours, so that this sudden proximity with the end had flooded her with an equally abrupt desire to live? She had not felt this desire before. In the endless hours death had seemed remote, inevitable, but remote. Now it was dangerously close. She looked in all directions, moving her head slowly in the heat, but with thoughts that raced, to find at all costs a way of spinning longer the hours she had wished to compress. But these hours were now remorselessly compressed about her ears, they weighed above her eyes in the blanketing air, air that was thinning yet thus grew thicker, and her eyes finally returned to the needle, which even in that short time had encroached upon two further units.

Desiring life, her regrets took form. She no longer pitied herself as one neglected. She strove now strongly to recapture what might have been. Her regret now consumed the past : " What I could have done—in that long time ! " The sensation of growing physically smaller which had distinguished her mood of self-pity now reversed itself in these positive regrets ; she felt herself grow larger with the striving of thought, her mind attacked, she summoned at each possible resource, she seemed to grow large with the strength to attack. The time that had been wasted, the opportunities missed, the effort unpractised ! Now in the shortening moments she thought back upon her past as a compartment of time whose every minute should have been utilized with faultless efficiency. She imagined only an inexhaustible energy that had been voluntarily let to waste ; she forgot the necessities of rest, of disorder, of lethargy, of melancholy, of digression—all the negative inclinations through which in complementary struggle the positive energies exist. No, in Margherita's sweating, panting, leadening brain there thrummed only the one-faced regret that the minutes should have been more used. She could have done this, she could have done that ; she could have planted this avenue of limes, she could have blessed that maritime charity ; she could have proceeded with her journal, she could have seen to the re-equipping of the dairy ; she could, standing on a hill once at dawn, have appreciated more fully the message of the iridescent skies, she should then have exerted her senses so that forever after she could have recreated that dawn ; she should have multiplied her lover by many lovers ; or she should have disdained him incarcerating herself within a shell of virtue shaped by tireless impeccable effort. Whatever it was, she had left it undone. However much she might have done, she could have done more. However much she had seen, she had not felt deeply enough. However much

she had felt, she had not stored those feelings deeply enough.

As again she rose the bed groaned—the sockets of its wooden frame seemed to complain beneath an invisible pressure. She dragged over the short linoleum journey to the manometer. Her feet lifted heavily, every such effort was made beneath a great weight. Her head nodded. She had made the journey from bed to manometer many times. Each time, even as her steps grew slower, as the needle swept closer, even within an ever-increasing desire to lie down and sleep—her desire for life mounted. As she looked through the engineer's brass at the dial she saw the needle encroaching, as steadily as the sun's shadow, upon the second unit beneath the blue danger stars.

Gasping, with slack shoulders, she dragged the prie-dieu from its place and set it by the manometer. She knelt beneath this dial and stared, not for a moment longer daring to leave it. Who knew whether the needle might not suddenly spring forward? If she stared, she could superintend its motion and know intimately the speed of her decline.

And as the oxygen thinned and the pressure weighed more heavily, as the time shortened and the blue stars approached, as the units increased their pace and her grasp for life fought at their speed to slow it—sorrow for the past changed to a more virile regret for the future. The vague images of matters in which she was not ordinarily interested suddenly enthused her—the building of the new wing at the southerly aspect of the old convent fortress; how appalling that she would never, never see this! The installation of an electric laundry—this would occur, many other changes would occur, but she, dead Margherita, would never, never see them . . . Gripping the sides of the prie-dieu and staring through the brass shield she thought then of the problems of doctrine, of behaviour, of prayer

that would now never be solved. She thought with growing envy of the great goodness of life, the browning bloom of autumn fruit, the ice-slush on the February roads, the draughts of winter, the huge dusty leaves shading their green midsummer trees—and above all the skies that went with the seasons, the skies to which she had looked for consolation . . . a thousand good things she would never feel nor see again. She would never see them. There was no hope left. Yet—it was still inconceivable that there should be no hope! Hope was bred in her living veins. But a new weight of reason was cruelly forcing at her senses, crushing out hope. With her pale scrubbed nails she began picking at the little brass wires of the shield. One fingernail weaved like a worm through the square and thrust itself straight at the needle, smelling at it, but yet inches away. Her mouth began to mumble, sagging, letting water.

How many hours had she endured in that room? A hundred? Days perhaps? There had been no measurement. The last hour of all dropped its lead on her nodding neck, she slipped from the prie-dieu on to the floor. Her finger pointed still at the manometer, but weakly. Her veil fell aside, revealing the nunnish pate bald as an ant's egg. An intolerable weight of sleep pulled her down, pulled at her eyelids, her puffed breathless lips, the muscles in her bluing cheeks. She forgot about the future.

Her eyes craved only for some taste of the present, the sight of birdflight, the colour of a flower, the pressure of her man's arms, the lick of fruit. How strong these could have tasted! Her lips opened and her tongue came swelling out, everfattening, gently to lick the air.

The vision of the taste of fruit faded, as in their order the wish for the future had faded, the regret for the past, her first incapacity to believe in death; and now lastly as a swimmer out of her depth she began to struggle, her forebrain gone, only now like an animal, thoughtless but to

move, the instincts alone in charge. The naked head lurched from side to side, her arms weaved slow frog movements, weakening at each thrust. Before long they stopped moving altogether.

### POEM

THEY HAVE SO feared to be free  
Who have enslaved.  
Who have shred hunger over the earth  
Have so thirsted for chains.

They have so clung to their burden  
Who have claimed obedience.  
Who have set war and exalted death  
Have so feared to be.

They have so trembled in the wilderness  
Who have imprisoned,  
Who have so feared to be free  
With terror of loneliness.

R. S. SILVER



## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

GERRARD WINSTANLEY: SELECTIONS FROM HIS WORKS. Edited by LEONARD HAMILTON. With an Introduction by CHRISTOPHER HILL. Cresset Press. 7s. 6d.

MR. HILL'S INFORMATIVE introduction to this interesting volume relieves the reviewer of an otherwise numbing sense of ignorance. Save when he was leader of the Diggers in 1649-50, little is known of Winstanley's life. His fame, like his experiment, was brief; he made the idle attempt to introduce "practical" Christianity (i.e. a Christian communism) among a Christian community, and it is worth noting that when he and his "poor" collected together in April, 1649, to dig and plant the waste land on St. George's Hill, near Cobham, the parson joined with the justices of the peace and the lord of the manor to invite the protection of the military arm. Probably the parson was right. There is the scriptural admonition to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and we most of us subscribe (and rightly, I am sure) to the later argument of Burke that in politics what in theory is most proper and just may in practice be found impossible or harmful.

Winstanley believed in the natural goodness of man. It is therefore saddening to read his pages, knowing that he must deal with men declined from a state of nature. He was so utterly right in much of his preaching, but his faith in reason was childlike and unjustifiable. One can think of no political system (Communism included) which would not find itself compelled to bruise him under its heel, and on the whole he was fortunate to live under the Commonwealth which at least allowed him to live his life out. This selection from his writings is likely to give him a much increased reputation. He is of value as a recorder of past time, from an unusual point of view, he was part of the historical process

from Anabaptism to Marxism, and he was an excellent and pithy writer.

GWYN JONES

PER ARDUA. HILARY ST. GEORGE SAUNDERS. Oxford University Press ; illustrated. 15s.

FROM ITS FIRST uncertain beginning Hilary Saunders' lively pen records the development of the R.A.F. up to the outbreak of the present war. Although unofficial this, the first volume of a complete illustrated history, is authoritative, backed by the author's ripe judgment and intimate experience as Air Ministry's best-selling pamphleteer.

As one would expect, *Per Ardua* does fine justice to the tradition and achievements in action of the R.A.F. and its forbears, the R.F.C. and R.N.A.S. In the spirit of Jones and Raleigh, to whose monumental history of the last war in the air he is avowedly indebted, Mr. Saunders pays tribute to the qualities of pilots on both sides—for "the engine is the heart of an aeroplane, but the pilot is its soul." There are, moreover, numerous illuminating parallels to be drawn between that struggle and the present one, as, for example, in the value of leaflet raiding, air attacks upon London, the use of the fighter-bomber, and in measures employed to defeat the U-boat. But, although war survey occupies three parts of the book, it is the fourth part which will provoke most interest and discussion.

In his first chapters Mr. Saunders describes the birth-pangs of the R.F.C. The struggle was largely one of individual enthusiasts—"Audacious men, they clothed their vibrant vision with wood and linen" is the phrase of Cecil Day Lewis' dedicatory poem—against official obstruction. Not only had the claims and prejudices of the two older services to be overcome, but almost farcical conditions of experimentation were imposed. Through the ironic restraint of its telling one feels the author's charac-

teristic impatience with such unimaginative state policy. At a time when the War Office decided to cease making experiments with aeroplanes as the cost (£2,500) had proved too great, Germany was already spending about £400,000 on military aeronautics.

When an air force was established its troubles had only just begun. A new and persistent source of controversy was the question of control. Independence—or subservience to War Office and Admiralty? The formation of the R.A.F. did not solve the problem, since the Admiralty remained inplacable in its demand for a separate Fleet Air Arm. The resultant manoeuvring, between 1919 and 1938, Mr. Saunders presents with the least possible bias, as also the wider issues of the Geneva Disarmament Conference, on whose secretariat he himself served. Naturally he cannot resist an occasional tilt against the "Whitehall warriors" of the day. Where credit lies, however, for safeguarding the Service structure in years of drastic reduction and for rebuilding it just in time to meet the gravest hazard of all, full credit is given. Only in the section devoted to peacetime operational activities of the R.A.F. is one conscious of omissions, but a chronology and bibliography either supply or suggest sources for the data. Otherwise, in the mingled unorthodoxy, humour, and professional seriousness of this compact history, there is much cause for satisfaction and for anticipation of the second volume.

ALAN WALBANK

HOME TOWN ELEGY. G. S. FRASER. Nicholson and Watson, P.L. Books. 6s.

SEA TALK. GEORGE BRUCE. William MacLellan, Poetry Scotland Series. 6s.

THE EXPECTANT SILENCE. WILLIAM SOUTAR. Andrew Dakers. 5s.

*Home Town Elegy* and *Sea Talk* are both first books,

which contain achievement and promise of still better things to come.

G. S. Fraser came before the literary public as one of the poets linked to the New Apocalyptic movement. Yet his was never more than a surface attachment; for his verse is Byronic rather than quasi metaphysical in tradition. But you will not find Byron's swagger or robustness in Mr. Fraser's work, because he is very much the child of "this unlucky age", as he calls it. And his is the regretful disillusion and the weary nostalgia of the generation whose inheritance was an unidealistic war. If it were not so, he would not be such a true voice of that generation as he undoubtedly is.

Mr. Fraser's images are always precise and sharp. There is not a single line in the whole book which can upset even the most sensitive of the obscurity-shy. The poems are consistently musical. This effect, to a large extent, is produced by the poet's use of placid, regular rhythms, which rarely become wearisome and never descend to a mere jog-trot, as they so easily could in the hands of a lesser craftsman. As is fit and proper in a Scottish poet, much of Mr. Fraser's work reflects the sights and sounds of his native country.

Superior critics delight in pointing to the weaknesses which can be found in almost any young poet's first book. They may say of Mr. Fraser that he will descend to a strained inversion in order to get a rhyme. And so he does: but such a slight and occasional defect sinks to insignificance when considered against the many fresh and lovely surprises contained in the poetry. Others may say that the writing often becomes casual in manner, that the poet is neurotic and hypersensitive. To me the casualness—I prefer to call it naturalness—is a relief. When so much that is tortuous and mystifying is being written it is a delight to read someone who is not afraid to be himself.

During the last five years the world has not offered much encouragement to the scholar or the humanitarian. It is small wonder that Mr. Fraser, who is something of both, should give voice to despair; a sad, not quite hopeless despair which is more truly the temper of his generation at the present time, than the patriotic mumbo-jumbo of the latest popular versifier of the moment. G. S. Fraser is one of the most genuine and unpretentious poets that Scotland has produced.

George Bruce almost recreates the physical atmosphere of the north-east coast of Scotland in his work, which has a curious cold quality about it. By employing irregular rhythms and rarely using full rhymes he achieves a detached, esoteric, texture. He is a painter in water-colour; but his best poems give a sense of timelessness which even a good water-colour does not. His poems about the sea and Scottish fisherfolk are for the most part brilliantly successful. When he becomes lyrical or sentimental his methods and technique are apt to fail him. His style is markedly personal, and even his least convincing poems have a certain quiet distinction. Mr. Bruce is another poet with a considerable future.

Both these books are most attractive in format, and should be in the homes of all those interested in the best work by the younger Scottish writers.

William Soutar's book, *The Expectant Silence*, was prepared for publication shortly before the poet's death, at the age of 45, in the autumn of last year. It therefore contains his most mature work in English. Although the compass of the poems is small, within his limited range William Soutar achieved a remarkable intensity of emotional effect, philosophical rather than sensuous. He had come to a kind of gentle pantheism wherein he asserted the ultimate dominion of nature over man's joys and sorrows and disasters. He believed in "the governance of

life", as he called it. The influence of his doctrine can be traced in the work of several of the younger Scottish poets.

Soutar's prim little stanzas tend to become monotonous. But in every line the courage and the dignity of thought never fail to astonish and satisfy. He is not a major poet, and his best work is in Scots : but his English poems are by no means without merit, and deserve to be read in their own right. Only a small part of his writings have so far been published. C. M. Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid) has prepared the collected edition of Soutar's poems, which is appearing towards the end of next year. This, together with his diaries, which are also in course of preparation for the press, should establish William Soutar's permanent place in Scottish letters beyond all doubt.

These three books offer convincing evidence of the flowering of the Scottish Renaissance in at least one of its several branches. Those who pervertedly believe that Scotland has ceased to exist except as a name on a map, would do well to take note. Those who enjoy good poetry written in English will find contact with these three distinguished and original minds a stimulating and pleasurable experience all too rarely available at any time.

MAURICE LINDSAY.

SHAKESPEARIAN GLEANINGS. E. K. CHAMBERS.  
Oxford University Press. 10s.

THIS IS ANOTHER collection of studies old and new. Five essays are now printed for the first time, the most valuable of these being "The Date of Hamlet" and "The Mortal Moon Sonnet". The most impressive things here, as we should expect, are "The Disintegration of Shakespeare", "The Unrest in Shakespeare Studies," and "The Integrity of The. Tempest", in which Sir Edmund combats with learning and an ashplant all who would make inroads on the Shakespeare canon. The late J. M. Robertson and Professors Pollard and Dover Wilson are the adversaries

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G. J.

**A VICTORIAN DIARIST.** Extracts from the Journals of Mary, Lady Monkswell, 1873-1895. Edited by the Hon. E. C. F. COLLIER. Murray. 16s.

ALL PERSONAL PAPERS are impregnated with the essence of their age, and it is usually easy to identify the vintage of the diarist by the bouquet of contemporary fashion in allusion and outlook. The recently published diaries of Mary, 2nd Lady Monkswell, respond easily to this test. They are most perfectly typical of the actively minded, indifferently cultivated woman of the leisured, indeed, privileged classes of the later Victorian period; anxious to participate in her husband's interests, yet insufficiently gifted for making observations of value.

To compare these papers with the diaries of Mary Gladstone might appear rather cruel, and yet publication invites comparison. The background is the same. There are the same period, the same world, sometimes the same acquaintance; the social functions and royal ceremonies; the continental journeys; the reactions to Italian cities and German music. Yet what a difference separates the two women: a difference of quality of mind. The rare, spontaneous originality of Gladstone's daughter can revive a scene in a brief trenchant phrase: in Lady Monkswell's case the same scene may be shown, laboriously detailed, emphasizing the unimportant. Yet she no doubt reflects



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LAURENCE BINYON: "Thank you for a glowing poem."

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the average mentality of her age more faithfully than her gifted and fascinating contemporary. YVONNE FFRENCH  
VISIONS AND MEMORIES. HENRY W. NEVINSON.

Oxford University Press. 10s. 6d.

IT IS HARD to fix a label to the late H. W. Nevinston. "He did not fit neatly into any niche," says Professor Murray, contributing the Introduction to Mrs. Nevinston's selection. It would need the paradoxical pen of a G. K. C. or a G. B. S. to do justice to the seemingly contradictory elements in Nevinston's life and writings. Not a scholar-gipsy, as in his beloved Matthew Arnold's poem, but a scholar-journalist; a man of peace and an internationalist, President of the P.E.N. 1937-8, yet one of our most brilliant war correspondents, as his son is possibly the most brilliant painter of the chaos that war leaves in its wake; an admirer of mystics, yet a steady member of the Rationalist Press Association; a lover of the art and literature of Greece and Rome, and yet a defender of "modern" movements in both art and life. . . .

Mrs. Nevinston's selection presents as many sides of this varied character as is possible in a brief volume. Thus we read an extremely interesting essay on "The Bible's Influence", and find at the end that it was originally contributed to *The Rationalist Annual*. Essays on Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, Swift, and Ruskin rub shoulders with "Marinetti: Futurist"; and scholarly notes on classical Greece are balanced by an appreciation of the Greek resistance to Mussolini in 1940. My personal impression throughout was, indeed, one of *balance*: the scholarly mind in fine conjunction with the individual experience, the exuberant idealism offset by the practical rationalism of the investigator. Paradox has not forsaken Henry Nevinston even now, for this book, intended no doubt as a memorial, is more fittingly described as an "introduction", and few readers, encountering him here for the first time,

# THE WELSH REVIEW

Edited by GWYN JONES

Volume III, No. 4.

December, 1944.

Price-Parry (story)

Oranges (story)

The Cat and the Man (poem)

Birthday Poem

What is Minor Poetry ?

Welsh Folk Verses

Do Universities Educate ?

The Changing Countryside

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will not want to go on to meet him again in the *Autobiographies* or *The Dardanelles Campaign*, in *The Dawn in Russia* or *Essays in Rebellion*. "He is a man of very violent opinions, isn't he?" said a passport official once to Richard Nevinson. "Oh, dear, no!" replied Richard ("who had known me from his childhood"); "he's the mildest of men." "When I say violent opinions," the official returned, "I mean he doesn't see eye to eye with the man in the street. . . ." "It was an official definition of violence," Henry Nevinson concludes, "unsurpassed in precision, and I understood then the grounds of my evil repute."

R. C. CHURCHILL

ONCE A JOLLY SWAGMAN. MONTAGU SLATER.

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AMONG THE HOAR-FROSTS of our "winters of discontent" Montagu Slater's novel is like one of those rare flowers giving promise of spring.

Both technically and from the point of view of content it poses an extraordinary challenge: will the novel tend more and more to become a film scenario, and will character be reduced to the two-dimensional proportions of celluloid?

It was Christopher Isherwood who, in this country, first saw the possibilities of applying the film script technique to the novel. Short, staccato sentences and the clipped dialogue of ordinary speech caught every accent in the drama of the neurotic underworld of Berlin before this war. Landscape, atmospheric ballast, and all the heavy-going stuff of the old novel was excluded, and the narrative did not so much explain as suggest. The result was a certain catching rhythm, like a jazz tune, and a superficial brilliance; but there was little indication of what Christopher Isherwood had to say beyond reporting a very sad human situation.

Montagu Slater has an even greater sense of economy because he derives from drama and film more thoroughly



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than any of his contemporaries. He selects the significant scenes and summarizes situations without wasting a word, so that every phrase tells and becomes a little more than itself, a symbol. The first hundred pages of his book which show, through the autobiographical narrative of his hero, the graduation of a young Kentish Town lad into a dirt-track rider, a tough among the toughest, are the raciest since the early Hemingway. And there is an alliance with the moods and antics of a "growing boy" which is brilliantly realized "naïvete" itself.

But the flaws in Slater's novel, and the dangers of this kind of filmy novel, begin to be apparent when the representation of action gives place to the dramatization of thought. A hero begins to seem very empty and barren if no inner change happens in him through all the experience of going half-way round the world. And then if he suddenly becomes self-conscious through meeting an intellectual like Haldane or Bernal, as Bill Fox does, that is not an integral change. Thus you have an almost perfect book of its kind whose formal qualities constrict the lives of the characters, a situation neatly described by Roy Campbell when he said :—

"They use the snaffle and curb all right,  
But where is the bloody horse?"

I believe that the positive influence of the film in a complex society like the Western will be of immense advantage to the novel in ridding it of redundancies and imitative eighteenth-century manner. But the novel must retain its respect for character and the poetry of human experience. Slater knows this and has sought to balance the rhythm of modern life with one of its characteristic creations, Bill Fox, dirt-track ace, death rider, and commando. He nearly succeeded in writing the most startling English novel of recent years, but—

MULK RAJ ANAND

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

' The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

Edited by ROBERT HERRING

FEBRUARY

## EDITORIAL

1945

WAR STARTS EMOTIONALLY. As soon as someone loses an arm someone else loses his head and declares that "war brings out the best in us". This is followed by the Government our laziness lands us with declaring with equal hysteria that there is nothing better for us than war, what fun it is, we never wanted to be well or happy or well fed, did we, that was all nonsense, look at the bombs, what a heaven-sent challenge—you can see what nonsense all else is by the fact that those who were supposed to be working for well-feeding and happiness go with such readiness into reverse gear and spend their energies proving we want less of everything normally associated with life, whatever. Except, of course, paper for normal publication.

There is for the Government, which has to put out its views to its departments, and for them to reply, very politely, in what amount to paraphrases of H.Q.'s directives. Since all Governments must hide their meaning (otherwise the taxes that keep them in power would not be paid) it follows that a peculiar form of English is devised. This is imitated by those who have to write back. And so we get to the third stage of a war which is only a way of life gone ingrown. We get the Absence of Style. In war it isn't only the willingness to die that is heroic, but the fierce wish to survive. A good enough thing in its own way, and one on which that forerunner of the U.S.S.R., the British Empire, or as we now kow-tow to calling it, the British Commonwealth, was raised. But survival is a low

form of civilization. Survival may now seem taking a low trend, but a long-term view of civilization shows it to be on the up grade. We have to survive, not only to outlast our present bullying dogs, but to show that we *can* reach that better life. Nevertheless, none of us have any particular interest in surviving as such. A rat can do that ; but a rat wants progressively better quarters, and, as rat, gets them. Rats have no identification cards. Having survived, rats win style. The rat that knows its rat-ness wishes not to increase but to improve ; to be, as they say, happier.

But writers ? One of the hardest things for an editor to do is not only to keep away from inter-wainscot feuds, but to send back those who emerge, after a titbit of cheesy publicity, until they have learnt how to write. This is where reviewers come in. Unfortunately, reviewers, in the good sense, are rare among those who can teach them. Reviewing is not just a case of saying : " I don't like this book, because no one should have written it but me," nor " I like it, it's a friend of mine I taught to talk as I do." Reviewing is hard to come by, I think my readers will agree I have done well by them lately, though it's been the weakest side of the paper in the war years. But plenty of writers have to catch up with even reviewers ; we have too little style, too much stylization, of which more later—or perhaps less ; if you notice which books we review.

*(Compressed in proof to fit space.)*



# BETWEEN THE IDEA AND THE REALITY

By MARJORIE LINGARD

(1)

THE WORLD OF ideas has been so long in eclipse that now we take it for granted. When T. S. Eliot wrote

“ Between the idea  
and the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act  
Falls the shadow  
For thine is the Kingdom.”

it was no doubt a statement of an entirely novel situation. But now this shadow hangs over all the things of the mind.

This situation did not arise when the things of the mind were pursued for their own sake. The musician was content to make beauty by ordering sound, as the poet was content to make beauty by ordering words. Sir Thomas More wrote his Utopia for its own sake without relating it to the world around him, and the saints and anchorites lived holy lives without deep desire that those around them should do the same. Men sought self-consummation in their own lives, and did not wish to become mob leaders or messianic stars on which all humanity should converge.

That all this has changed is due to the fact that the population of the world has enormously increased, that this population has been made articulate and vociferous, and that in every country, whatever the brand of politics, lip service is paid to the doctrine that there is no individual good which is not also a common good. Thus the ideologist no longer lives in the perfect world of the mind and steps out into reality to eat, but must relate his world to reality. Thus the shadow falls. Thus there is frustration and unhappiness for the creative thinker and creative artist. For outside them there is this clamouring population which must be included in the symphony, political doctrine,

or poem, and will raise howls of execration if it is not so included.

In examining the responses of the creative individual it would be simpler briefly to take typical examples. There is, for instance, Shostakovitch, the Soviet composer, who composes creatively in terms of the mass Russian mind, and still more difficult—in terms of contemporary Russian history. There was the group of Left poets in this country in the early thirties which sought to make its poetry a vehicle of communist resurgence and failed, so that W. H. Auden is now in America, and Day-Lewis and Spender are suave conventional voices with little connection with contemporary working men. There is the vast host of novelists who produce characters with which the masses can identify themselves, and in whose individual triumphs and tribulations they can find temporary nirvana. It is useless to criticize creative artists for pandering to the masses. The truth is that in an age when there are no wealthy patrons to subsidize the arts, it is necessary for the creative artist to pander to the masses or the State if he is to live.

But by far the most typical response of the potentially creative individual is to abandon creative work, and become a popularizer of those creative individuals of the past over whom the shadow did not fall. It is no accident that the most well-known philosopher in this country is Professor Joad, who is also the most assiduous popularizer of philosophy, and whose own philosophy is a re-hash of Bergson, Shaw, and Butler, with his own individual pepper added to it. Now the ordinary man reaches Socrates by Joad and Beethoven by Ralph Hill as he reaches London by Peterborough. In the same way the majority of other reviews that have survived the war devote nine-tenths of their space to critical or explanatory articles, and mainly serve as popularizers.

The main justification of the popularizers is that those who have plunged deep into the world of the mind must now pause for a time, and wait for the masses to catch up. Better still they must act as teachers and help the masses to catch up. The pace of all must be the pace of the slowest. In an age when the creative artist must work for the masses or resign himself to poverty and oblivion, it is really idiotic to reach beyond Wagner, Shaw, and Wells until the masses have caught up to Beethoven, Shakespeare, and Dickens.

This shadow, however, does not only rest over the arts, philosophy, and so on, but over religion and politics. If it is necessary for the creative artist to adapt himself to a sub-artistic world, it is also necessary for the Christian to adapt himself (in the words of the late Archbishop of Canterbury) to a "sub-christian world". In other words, the New Testament which was in any case ten thousand years too early, must be thrust inside a pigeon-hole until the world catches up with it. Thus our churches to-day are not hot fires of human charity and righteousness which melt down individuals and make them what they were not, but popularizers of religious truths which have always been accepted by minorities in all ages. The awesome sermons of John Donne have given place to simple talks on God. Man speaks to man where once righteous divine castigated unrighteous layman, a polite insinuation takes the place of a bold affirmation, and Christianity now represents an infiltration into the chaos of the age rather than a frontal attack upon it. For it would be a disadvantage to be a Christian in an age where the masses are benighted. It would be wrong to ask any rich man to give away his wealth to the poor, and distribute his coats to those who needed them, when the only consequence of such behaviour on his part would be that his dismayed family, thus plunged into poverty by his irresponsible actions, would petition

the authorities for his incarceration inside a lunatic asylum. Thus current Christian ethics are a rough shoring, a Portal House of the mind, that must survive over the time-lag of the shadow.

It is perhaps amusing that the socialists, who more than any other body of political thinkers, have praised the masses and derided the individual, should also be under the same necessity to erect a Portal House of the mind. In effect, by entering into coalition with non-socialists in order to bring the war to a triumphant conclusion, they abandoned their previous doctrines. It is very difficult to connect contemporary socialist leaders with the Communist Manifesto, Morris's *News from Nowhere*, Bellamy's *Looking Backwards*, and the writings of Lenin. If they do echo the dead voices of the past they echo muddily. Yet in accepting the necessity of the war they are closer to the masses than they would be if they became recalcitrants and better protagonists of them.

There are no Utopias except in the mind, and never will be. Life takes hold of ideas and bends them like grass. Now, in particular, we do not think from ourselves, but from life's impact; and it is probable that the individual will be battered by the masses who are the stuff of life and the age for many generations yet. Over him the shadow will incessantly fall.

There is no solution for this problem. History cannot be unwritten. There are only alternatives. Creative individuals can endure the battering, and remain obdurately themselves. They are the saints of the age. Conversely, like Churchill, Joad, and Edgar Wallace, they can boldly accept the impact of the masses, and become leaders, popularizers, and best-read novelists. They are the great men of the age. And those caught between the two alternatives are merely lost and bewildered. But when so many are lost and bewildered, who can spare the time to save *them*?

VESTALS AND VESTRIES  
A CONTINUATION  
*Being further extracts from the journal of*  
FLORENCE ALICE SITWELL

edited by  
OSBERT SITWELL

(The last part of the diary to be published was for the year 1877. This portion is for the year 1880: the diarist was aged 21 . . . The earlier years appeared as the second part of *Two Generations*, which was issued by Macmillan's, 1940.)

PART I  
THE VILLA ALLEGRIA  
*1st January—August, 1880*

A Cannibal Feast—Maggy once more—A ball dress—Making pills—The Channel—Chinese Ambassadors—A disagreeable French Nobleman—A Saloon Carriage—Olive trees again—Church on arrival—An old friend—The Villa Allegria—The complexity of life at Cannes—Nihilism and the Kingdom of Christ—The Villa compared to the Country House at Cassiaum—Blanche—Mabille—A Musical Forehead—Difficulties of first morning—The Favourite Hymn—Pockets full of shells—A question of Numbers—A Madame Romanoff—The Sunset—A girl like a boy—A breakdown—Pegomas—Singing by Moonlight—Mother's Health—A Sudden Death—Willy opens up—Days never to be forgotten—A dictum of Archbishop Tait's—Gaieties—Dear Old Mr. Bonamy Price.

1880

*Jan 1.* We had Aunt Rose for dinner. She had brought us little New Year's presents and was very kind. Grace wrote to accept Aunt Harriet's invitation to go with her to the York ball. I declined with thanks.

*Jan. 2.* Two letters for me at breakfast, one from Clara Estcourt; the other from Maggy ran as follows: "New Year's day. Dear old Florence. Thank you so much for the book: it is very nice, and nicer still of you to think of me. Many happy New Years to you, and may the next be more free from anxiety to you and yours than last. God bless you. I don't think we shall be in London again at

the very earliest till the 17th. We are due at Wentworth on the 13th for the Barnsley Ball, and shall in all probability stay till the Saturday following. I will write soon again. Your loving cousin and friend, Maggy."

There the letter ends, and its kindness rather softens the disappointment of not meeting her in London. It is two years and a quarter since we last saw each other !

Directly after Prayers, Grace and I started to hunt for her ball-dress. A very pretty white one, draped with Indian silk edged with Bretonne lace, was finally found, with which we want her to wear deep red flowers.

*Jan. 4.* Sunday. Lovely day. To see Augusta Woodall with a book she wanted, directly after breakfast. Then to Christ Church. The new curate, Mr. Durrard, preached. In the afternoon read up a subject on which I am very ignorant. About four o'clock Charlotte Desborough, one of my Girls' Friendly Society members came to pay her quarter's subscription, and to have a talk.

She works at Dr. Brooke's, making pills, for which she is paid seven shillings a week. She and all those girls similarly employed work together in one room under the superintendence of a middle-aged woman who is "very strict" with them—they mustn't laugh, or make a noise, or sing over their work. Both her parents are living, her father is employed by the gas company. She has two sisters older than herself, several younger, and one small brother. She is nineteen ; but *very* ignorant, cannot read three consecutive words without stopping to spell, and says she has never cared to learn. Now she is beginning rather to wish to read, for her younger sisters can all read very nicely, and are so fond of their Bibles, she says. If she learns to read by the time I come back, she is to have a Bible given to her for herself ; and she seems pleased, and has promised to try. She went to Sunday School for a long time, but not regularly.

Evening Service—sermon from Mr. Stapleton. The chapters read in church first now are from Isaiah, and *most* lovely. It was worth while to go to church for that alone.

*Monday, 5th.* A most busy day. Morning and afternoon filled with shopping and preparations. At 5 o'clock the Archdeacon came to administer the Holy Communion to Aunt Minnie. Mother and I stayed with her. The Archdeacon is overworked and thoroughly done up, and Dr. Hobson orders him as much rest as he can manage for a few days. He said to me, "How very nice your Aunt looks," as I was saying good-bye to him in the hall: and seemed to think her much better. Several people remarked to me how much better she looks, and indeed she appears so to me too.

All the next days very busy, full of preparations and good-byes. On Wednesday Grace went to the York Ball, which she enjoyed very much. Saturday, luncheon at the Vicarage: working and packing.

*Jan. 12.* After packing and running about doing things all the morning, we had a hasty luncheon at twelve-thirty, and drove to the station directly afterwards. Aunt Minnie was comfortably settled in a saloon-carriage: then all our friends came to bid us a long good-bye. The Archdeacon spoke very kindly. Mr. Müller<sup>1</sup> and the boys came rushing up in a state of great excitement to show us a letter in *The Times* from George and his friend, Carl von Buch, headed *The Capture of a Spirit*<sup>2</sup> and giving an account of the action by which one of them (George) seized the so-called spirit

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Bruce Iwan Muller, at that time acting as tutor to the diarist's brother, Sir George Sitwell. Subsequently he became a well-known journalist, editor of the *Manchester Courier*, then assistant editor of the *Pall-Mall*, and leader-writer for the *Daily Telegraph*. In later life, he specialized as a journalist in foreign politics.

<sup>2</sup> This curious incident, of which an account will be found in the editor's forthcoming book, *Left Hand, Right Hand!* took place at the Headquarters of the National Association of Spiritualists on 2nd January, 1880. It was the first exposure of Modern Spiritualism, and caused much commotion.

*Marie*<sup>1</sup> by the wrists at a seance in Great Russell Street, and the other, drawing aside the curtain at the back, showed the medium's discarded garments, deserted cupboard, and the cords, by which she had been tied, lying loose on the floor. This piece of news excited us very much. "He has done it really *well*," said Mr. Müller. "It is a very good letter indeed." A touching parting ensued between our George Bradbury and his little May, who was lifted up in his arms for the last kiss. His wife felt too miserable to come to the station, but entrusted him particularly to Leckly's care for the three months of absence from home.

We were soon off: Mother, Aunt Minnie, Mr. Dale, Grace, and I in the saloon carriage; Leckly, Nurse, and George Bradbury in the adjoining compartment. Willie Worsley came with us as far as York, as it was his birthday, and his mother wished to give him a little pleasure.

*Tuesday, Jan. 13.* I woke to a London yellow fog which grew thicker as the morning wore on. Mother and I breakfasted by a bright fire, and brought in breakfast to our invalid, whom we found fairly well and bright, and whom we persuaded to stay in bed all day and have a good rest.

At about eleven, Mother and I started for the West End in a rattling cab. We called on Aunt Freddy and found her in the drawing-room with Grace and Tiny, who presently took me up to their little sitting-room which they have lately beautified in various ways. Tiny looks very poorly, but she has a sweet countenance.

From Granville Place we went to 37 Great Cumberland Place, where we found Aunt Albinia at home. She received us most kindly, and gave us little needle-boxes as keepsakes before we went.

We went to see Aunt Puss and found her and George delighted to see us: and of course a great deal was said

<sup>1</sup> Marie proved not to be a spirit, but the partly disrobed medium herself. She was the favourite medium of Sir William Crooks, O.M.



about the capture of the "Spirit", about which George was highly excited. He told me that she had only gasped when he caught her by the wrists, and she then pretended to sink into an unconscious state. He was sitting between two men during the seance, both firm believers in spiritualism, who talked to him a great deal about it, and even mentioned the "foolish attempts" made by some to catch spirits—to all of which George responded, "Oh, indeed!" and great was their surprise when later on he stepped calmly forward and seized the spirit. One man told him that he had no belief in a future state, but could not help half believing in these apparitions: there was something to him so strange in them! After the exposure he thanked George for having opened his eyes to the truth about them.

Aunt Puss came with us back to the hotel to see Aunt Minnie, after which Grace and Aunt Freddy arrived, and Marie Bacon, to see Mr. Dale. Marie told me a great deal about all her parish doings at Ham. She seems very happy. Little Grace sat a long time in Aunt Minnie's room talking to her. Then all the sad good-byes had to be said over again.

*Wednesday, Jan. 14.* Uncle Richard came early on purpose to pay our hotel bill, which was a most unlooked for kindness on his part. He is getting rather old and tottering now, but his face retains its firm, kind expression.

Next came Mr. White, the lawyer, on business, and immediately after him, George, who sat on the arm of Mother's chair for a long time, and talked about spiritualism and about his longings to follow us out to Cannes. Aunt Puss sat through our luncheon, and saw us off at the station for Dover.

A bath-chair met Aunt Minnie, on our arrival at Dover, and took her to the Hotel, where we found things dear and uncomfortable.

*Thursday.* Breakfast at eight-thirty, after which Mother and I walked down the pier to the steamer, and lay down in the cabin. Aunt Minnie followed in a bath-chair, and had a private cabin on deck with Nurse. We soon began to rock horribly, and had to lie very still and keep our minds composed in the midst of fearful sounds around us, for most of the poor ladies were very ill. On reaching Calais we went on deck, and found Aunt Minnie and Nurse both looking miserably pale. Some Chinese ambassadors in native attire were on deck. They looked wise, benign, and comical. One of them had the gout so badly that he was obliged to be carried by his attendants from the steamer to shore: and we feared each moment they would let him fall, for he was so fat, and the little passage so steep and narrow.

Aunt Minnie walked to the train, leaning on Mr. Dale's arm, and Mother and I and the maids got some coffee and rolls meanwhile at the Buffet. Just as we were all settled in our carriage, and the train was about to start, an exceedingly fat, coarse, disagreeable-looking French nobleman jumped into our carriage, who kept grumbling about Aunt Minnie being laid down (though there was plenty of room for him). Mother was obliged to snub him, after which he kept silence, and only responded to remarks by a grunt. Cook's man, Mr. Smith, who performed the part of a courier towards us, was exceedingly vexed about the whole thing.

We found our rooms at the Hotel de Rivoli very pretty and nice. Bright wood fires were burning in them in square, open fireplaces. They gave us a good dinner in the quaint little dining-room. The whole evening was spent by us in airing our sheets, which we found quite damp.

*Saturday.* At eleven o'clock we all started in our saloon-carriage, put on to the train, for the South of France. The carriage was divided into several compartments, in one

of which beds were arranged for Mother and Aunt M. The rest of us sat in the large compartment, which was full of arm-chairs, capable of being drawn out at night for sleeping on. In the centre of the carriage stood a narrow table, on which we prepared all our meals and made hot decoctions for Aunt Minnie. The carriage was warmed by ten long hot water tins, renewed every four hours. The hours wore on towards night. We chatted, cooked, ran in and out of our compartments, watched the snow-clad country as we rushed past, and read. I got a long way with Lord Lytton's *Zanoni*, which is a most strange book, and I cannot yet fully take in its meaning, though I hope it will become clearer as I go on. Presently the lamps were lit: we had our evening meal of bread and cold meat, after which we all settled ourselves for sleep.

*Sunday.* Waking at two-twenty-five a.m., I crept into the next compartment and had a whispered conversation with Mother, who was suffering much and sleeping little. Soon Mr. Dale awoke, and called maids to help to make something hot for Aunt Minnie and Mother. After which, all fell asleep again, except me. By pressing my face quite close to the window I could see the bright starlight, and found that the character of the country had already changed: the low stone walls and olive-trees I remembered so well were again before my eyes. Mr. Dale snored a good deal. I crept once or twice into the next compartment and found them asleep. It was an odd sort of Sunday morning, but rather nice.

At seven o'clock, just before sunrise, we arrived at Marseilles, and except Mother and our invalid, had breakfast at the buffet. Leck, Nurse, and I then walked right down Marseilles into the principal avenue. The air was intensely cold, and the town looked almost asleep, like its inhabitants, in the soft early morning light, with all the shutters closed. Only a few very busy people were still up and about. We

returned to our carriage and had an exquisite five hours' journey to Cannes. The sun came out gloriously ; the sky was cloudless ; and the mountains, rich vegetation, crimson rocks and deep blue Mediterranean, all formed a scene too lovely to be easily forgotten.

At one p.m. we arrived at Cannes, and drove to the Hotel Richemont, and were right glad to get some rest after twenty-six hours of railway travelling. Aunt Minnie was sent to bed at once. Mother, Mr. Dale, and I washed, changed our clothes, after which she rested in our sitting-rooms, and he and I went to afternoon church at St. Paul's close by. The church was full of English people ; and the choir was composed of visitors, with well-trained voices, and the singing sounded most sweet in the little church on this still afternoon. The sermon was on the subject of Christ's miracle of changing the water into wine, and was thoughtful, terse, and simple : reminding one of the sermons of Bishop Hall and other old divines.

All looked calm and lovely, bathed in sunlight, as we came out of church.

*Monday, Jan. 19.* I awoke nicely rested after ten and a half hours' sleep ! Poor Mother I found sadly knocked up by the journey : Aunt Minnie is wonderfully well, considering.

Mr. Dale and I started early on a search for villas. We took a light pony-carriage and drove first to Messrs. Taylor and Ridette. A long conversation ensued between Mr. Dale and Mr. Ridette on the subject of villas, which I listened to ; watching also with some interest and curiosity Mr. Ridette's face, speech, and gestures, which still continue to perplex me rather since two more similar interviews. From thence to the Hotel Pavilion to see the Woodalls. Mr. E. Woodall and his niece Miss Dent were in the sitting-room, and Miss Woodall in bed in the adjoining room, very poorly. Mr. Woodall accompanied us to

see Villas Allegría and Rebecca. The former we found very pretty, both house and garden, but not very well furnished. I took an immense fancy to it. Rebecca is on a much larger scale, but less sunny and cheerful. From Rebecca we drove up a hill to Hotel Bellevue, to call on old Mr. Bacon, and ask his advice about villas. He seemed to me greatly aged: his poor hands trembled *fearfully* during all the time of our visit. He came to see us after luncheon, at our hotel, and the poor hands again trembled a great deal.

*Tuesday, Jan. 20.* Mother and Mr. Dale went to see villas. I stopped at home: read and wrote letters; and took Aunt Minnie a tiny walk in the garden, but we soon came in on account of the great cold. Mother and Mr. Dale returned at luncheon-time, full of excitement about the villas.

After luncheon Lady Byron sent in her card to Mother, and was shown into our sitting-room. She has been some weeks at the hotel, but had never hitherto appeared at the *table d'hôte* on account of a sad accident she met with soon after her arrival. She was driving in a cab belonging to this hotel: the cabman was drunk, and upset his equipage with her in it, and her face was cut to pieces. She says that drivers here make a point of running over you whenever they have the chance, and then fined you five pounds for getting in their way. She has not the appearance of an educated woman.<sup>1</sup>

*Wednesday, Jan. 21.* Mr. Dale and I started at nine-thirty for Villa Allegría which we had decided to take, and made arrangements for occupying it as soon as possible. But an unfortunate hitch has occurred. We find it *most* scantily supplied with necessities of life, such as sheets, blankets, and spoons; and Mrs. Hollond does not seem inclined to give us what we naturally think

<sup>1</sup> Widow of the 8th Lord Byron.

we have a right to expect. This makes it very awkward, as we cannot give definite answers to cook, housemaid, or kitchenmaid, who have been seen with a view to engaging them. All orders have to be suspended till this tiresome affair is settled one way or another.

Mother, Aunt Minnie, and Mr. Dale went driving in the afternoon, to see other villas, in case this should fall through. Old Mr. Bacon came and stayed some time. I enjoyed talking with him, for he is a dear old man, and so good ! He says that the large acquaintance that life at Cannes naturally involves becomes almost a nuisance. He himself knows sixty families at Cannes, and, being not very strong, finds it hard work to call on them all. He said he detected for the first time in me a little likeness to my mother ! Then we got talking about Russia and the Nihilists, and somehow from that to the Kingdom of Christ which is to be—of which he spoke so trustfully, and patiently, and hopefully.

*Thursday, Jan. 22.* Soon after breakfast Mr. Dale and I started for a walk among the hills. The day was perfect, and the whole earth, with the chequered light and shade among the olive-groves, looked overflowing with happiness. In the afternoon we all four went out driving, first to leave a note at the Beaulieu ; from thence to Taylor and Ridette's, where we found to our great joy that Mrs. Holland was willing to give us all we asked for. So we drove straight to the villa, and now that it was to be ours, looked at it with fresh feelings of enjoyment. While we were running in and out of the sunshiny rooms, giving orders, and into the luxuriant garden, where cypress, lemon-trees, and roses looked so fresh, and so peaceful in the warm light, St. Augustine's words about the Country-House at Cassiaum, lent him by a friend, came back again and again into my mind : " In which from the fever of the world we reposed in Thee, with the eternal freshness of Thy

Paradise." Three happy months of this, if it is God's Will !

Arrangements, final ones, had to be made about servants. Mother engaged Gingues as chef-de-cuisine, a man with a charming countenance, whose *renseignements* are excellent in every way. Little Blanche-Mabille was engaged as house-maid, and Gingues was to choose his own kitchen-maid. So next day we found a young woman of fierce and Herculean appearance at work in his kitchen.

We noticed at *table d'hôte* in the evening a mother and son whom we had never seen before. The mother rather old and gentle-looking, had evidently once been very beautiful, and had a singularly sweet expression. The son had large features full of character, the massive forehead that always means music, and eyes with a certain fire in them ; the whole softened with a most pleasant smile. We were all wondering who they could be, and Mr. Dale kept saying : " They must be charming people. The mother is beautiful, and a perfect lady, and the young man has genius written on his face. He is all made up of soul." On inquiry Lady Byron told us that their name was Harvey ; that they were delightful people ; that the young man was a musical genius ; but that his sisters had been the *belles* of Paris, and had both married Frenchmen.

Lady Byron had previously introduced us to her husband, Mr. Frederick Douglas, a clergyman ; and they both sat near us at dinner. His face is most charming—frank, gentle, and refined ; but just a *little* weak. They are both here for their health. After dinner Lady Byron came to our sitting-room and stayed some time. She seems very nice and good-natured.

*Saturday, 24.* A red-letter day in our calendar ! We arrived at Villa Allegría with all our baggage. Everything looked too lovely for words ! We busied ourselves with unpacking and arranging both bedrooms and drawing-

room. My bedroom is a perfect sun-trap. It has a polished floor with bits of carpet laid about,<sup>1</sup> some good cupboards where I store my things; two tables where I pile my books, some simple chairs, and one easy chair. The bed was being made all day, and arrived in the evening. The windows open on to a balcony covered with creepers, and you look above the tree-tops far away to sea and the Esterelles.

*Sunday 25.* I woke early, very happy with the consciousness of being at the Allegria. Small difficulties occurred: the firewood was green and would not burn, and we got perished with cold, for it was quite frosty. Blanche had gone to Mass, and Gingues to market; Honorine could not get the coffee-pot to act, and what with one thing and another we had to wait an hour for breakfast!

Mr. Dale and I walked to church, and Mother drove with Leckly (the church is about a mile from Allegria). We had a delightful service and sermon, and curiously my favourite hymn again (which we had the last and only time I had been in that church, nearly four years ago)—“The King of love my Shepherd is!” Its strong joy and confidence remain in one’s mind for long after one has heard it. Mr. Palms preached, and we all liked him very much. The church was quite full.

Mr. Dale; Miss Dent with me. In the afternoon I walked in our lovely little garden, wrote to George and read.

*Monday, 26.* I walked with Mr. Dale in the town on various commissions during the morning, and in the afternoon, drove with Mr. Dale and Aunt Minnie to leave

<sup>1</sup> Compare this reference to the southern methods of furnishing with Charles Dickens’ account of Mrs. General, in a room of a Venetian Palace (*Little Dorrit*, vol. ii, chapter v) where the footman dispatched by Mr. Dorrit, found her “on a little square of carpet, so extremely diminutive in reference to the size of her stone and marble floor, that she looked as if she might have had it spread for the trying on of a pair of ready-made shoes; or as if she had come into possession of the enchanted piece of carpet bought for forty purses by one of the three princes in the *Arabian Nights*, and had that moment been transported on it, at a wish, into a palatial saloon with which it had no connection”.



the Archbishop's letters of introduction. One was answered in person, in the course of half an hour, by Miss Ann Lowther, a curious old lady, who began complimenting Mother on looking so young !

*Tuesday, 27.* Mother, Mr. Dale, and Leckly, drove to Antibes. I sketched for three hours in the garden with Aunt Minnie by my side. *Afternoon.* Mr. Bacon called, also Mr. Woolfield and his niece. Mr. Woolfield began life as a jeweller, and having amassed a large fortune, came to Cannes for a holiday, I suppose, and was so much delighted with it that he gave up business and settled here, built Christ Church and "made" the place. He is a dear, old-fashioned man, with a frilled shirt-front. Mr. Dale and I next walked into the town, and home by the sea-shore, which we found sad, toilsome work through the thick sands ; though a most lovely sunset almost made us forget weary limbs, and drainy smells ? I filled Mr. Dale's pocket with a quantity of delicate, purple-lined shells, picked up as I went along.

I began Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*. *Evening.* Mr. Dale read Macaulay on Gladstone, *Church and State* aloud to us. I read also *Zanoni*. Mother very seedy.

*Wednesday, 28.* Mother, Mr. Dale, and I drove into town, and then home. The Woodalls came to luncheon. In the afternoon Lord and Lady Plunket called. (He is the new Bishop of Meath.) They seem very nice people. He told us of the *maps of crime* published in Ireland, which must be strange things.

*Thursday, 29.* Sat in the garden doing German, called with Mr. Dale on the Woodalls, and from thence to Church for a short and most delightful service.

Dear old Mr. Bacon came to luncheon. In the afternoon Sir Charles McNeil and his wife called. He is a venerable looking old man, and she is rather odd, I think. I began a sketch of the house ; read an interesting article in *The*

*Times* on the increase of the German forces ; and did some more German (Weber's *Welt Geschichte*).

Mr. Dale read to us some Macaulay, and Ruskin's *Frondees Agrestes* in the evening. It is the first book of Ruskin's which I have come across, and I like it immensely.

*Friday, 30.* The day was quite oppressively hot. Mother, Mr. Dale, and I walked into the country among the rose gardens. We then dropped Mother at home, and he and I went into the town, and drove home. We talked much, as we walked, about different kinds of genius. On our return, we found Mother's old friend, Miss Lane, and her sister, Mrs. Broadleigh, in the drawing-room. Miss Lane has such a nice face, and made me feel at once as if I had always known her.

Began *Etudes de Litterature et d'Art* and sketched ; did German ; read Macaulay and *Zanoni*. An invitation from Lady Murray for a party next evening.

*Saturday, 31.* Each day gets more lovely. I drove with Mother, Mr. Dale, and Leckly into town to see about a piano. Leckly and I were dropped at the *Chalet du Ministre* where there is a lending library containing nearly five thousand volumes (of all kinds) for the use of the congregation of Christ Church. Mr. and Mrs. Palms and several of their daughters were busily at work dealing out the books and making lists. There have been eighteen sons and daughters ; but some have died, alas ! and some married. We chose our ten books, and went home in a carriage. In the *afternoon* I read Farrar's *Saintly Workers*, sketched, and read *Zanoni*.

Mother and I went to Lady Murray's at Villa Victoria in the evening. We were the first arrivals. Lady Murray is a fine looking woman, who was dressed in white satin with a Scotch scarf across. She is very clever, knows six languages, plays three instruments beautifully, and draws equally well. Mother and I did not take to her much. Her

boy, a very well-mannered young fellow of about fourteen, the image of his mother, "did the honours" capitally for his father, Sir Charles Murray, who had been ill in bed for a month. Lord Exeter's wife, sons, and daughters were there; also a lot of young Lindsays. We were only about thirty altogether. Two hours were spent in dancing. There was a most lovely Russian lady there, whose name I believe to be Madame Romanoff. She is tall and slight, with fair curly hair, beautiful features, wonderful complexion, and large hazel eyes. There was also a *most* charming little Spanish woman, who amused us very much with her brightness and fun. She is very stout, and quite lame, poor thing! but with a countenance beaming with goodness. She was telling Mother about a *bal masqué* in Spain at which she had been present some years ago, where her husband, completely disguised, came to her and, altering his voice, told her all the events and secrets of her life—"till at last I did get quite exasperated, and I did say to him, 'If you are not my best friend, you must be the Devil!' after which he did take pity on me and told me he was my husband."

*Sunday, Feb. 1.* I sat out in the garden between breakfast and church-time on the seat by the little pond with my books. Such a lovely, happy morning! the light shining gently through the long grass; and the birds trying their first songs; and the mountains bathed in a calm, misty light. Mother and I drove to church, and had again a most delightful service and sermon; after which we walked home, accompanied for some way by the Woodalls. In the afternoon, I sat out again, and read a good deal of Baldwin Brown's *Higher Life* and Farrar's *Saintly Workers*.

(*To be continued.*)

# THE HISTORY OF "HANSARD"

By FRANK FERNEYHOUGH

"HANSARD," THE INTRICATE and able machine that arranges the reporting and printing of Parliamentary debates, that enables the ordinary man to have in black and white the exact words his Member of Parliament has uttered on the floor of the House of Commons, that supplies to the press what is being said in Westminster, has its beginnings like so many other notable undertakings, in an ambitious young man from the provinces answering the call of London. In this case it was Luke Hansard, son of a Norwich manufacturer, and educated at the Boston Grammar School, Lincolnshire, who, with only a guinea in his pocket, journeyed to London to seek his fortune there.

Behind him were five centuries of known Hansards, the name itself having very close association with trade and enterprise. As far back as the fourteenth century there was in London a Hanseatic League, a merchants' association, designed to protect the trading interests of pioneers. In those far-off days, the League was sometimes called a "Hansa", a term that had drifted here from Europe.

But of much more practical use was Luke Hansard's knowledge of printing, gained during his apprenticeship to Stephen White, a Norwich printer. With the latter he had had all the advantages a small business can give, and on reaching London, the young Luke obtained a post as compositor in the office of John Hughs, who did much miscellaneous printing as required by Parliament. Being young and keen, Hansard made good progress in the service of Hughs, and considerably broadened his experience of the printing trade.

In 1774, when Hansard was only 22, he was taken into partnership with the firm, which reflects great credit on his industry and good workmanship. It so happened that the

firm of John Hughs also did the printing of Dodsleys; and Hansard came in for special notice from Dr. Johnson, who was pleased to have the young compositor attend to his requirements. Richard Porson of *Letters to Travis* fame, a Trinity College, Cambridge, man and a great student of Greek classics, praised Hansard highly, and maintained he was the most accurate of Greek printers. Further notice and esteem came Hansard's way in his association with the printing of Orme's *History of India* and Burke's *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, as well as other important publications of that period.

For many years before Hansard's time there had been a long and bitter struggle between the Press and the House of Commons as to what should be printed for the public to see. A law had been in force strictly forbidding the publication of Parliamentary reports; in fact, it is recorded in the House of Commons' official minutes for 1694, that "Dyer, a news-letter writer, has presumed in his news-letter to take notice of the proceedings of the House". This man was summoned to the Bar of the House and "acknowledging his offence humbly begged the pardon of the House for the same"; he was "upon his knees reprimanded by the Speaker for his great presumption". Other similar disputes followed from time to time, the climax being reached when the Commons sent the Lord Mayor of London to the Tower in 1771, just about the time Luke Hansard came to the Metropolis. It was in that year that direct suppression of the publication of Parliamentary debates ceased. Even so, Parliament reserved the right to go into secret if they so decided. To-day, that right is still reserved; all that is required is for a Member to "spy strangers".

During Hansard's early days as printer of Parliamentary papers, the debates he printed—not yet known under his name—were collected mostly from press reports. Before

they reached Hansard's firm, they had already been written, re-written, condensed, and chopped about, and finally reproduced in the third person. It was not the practice those days to quote a Member verbatim, though Ministers were usually reported in full; and Parliament when expedient still objected under the plea of "breach of privilege".

Despite these difficulties, Hansard exercised great caution and diplomacy and made many Parliamentary contacts, gaining the confidence of Members and Ministers, and building up a good reputation. Promptitude and accuracy had for years been his strong points; and many times his printed Parliamentary papers were of great service to the Government. There was one momentous occasion when the Cabinet were highly concerned with the French Revolution and its possible international repercussions, and a secret Committee met to debate on it. Only twenty-four hours after the first draft of the proceedings had left Pitt's hands, the proof sheets, printed by Hansard, were again returned to the Prime Minister.

By the time Luke Hansard was 48, which was in 1800, the printing business came completely into his hands.

The close of the century saw many changes in the relationship between the Commons and the Press. Despite the earlier attempts to withhold the debates from the public and the stiffening of Parliamentary resistance, the ever-growing public clamour for detailed reports of what was being said at Westminster had gradually made itself felt, and had encouraged those who had access to Parliament to write up from memory, and not a little imagination, the sayings and doings of the mighty. Such publication was now openly tolerated. In 1803 Hansard published under the title *The Parliamentary History* many reports he had gathered during his association with Parliament. In the same year he began the continuous reports of Parliamentary debates which are to this day known under his name. At

the same time the Press obtained a reserved portion of the gallery, marking a new trend in the direction of democracy.

It can be said that Luke Hansard knew his business from top to bottom. All his life he had been a hard worker; he had devised numerous expedients for lowering considerably the expenditure of publishing his reports. His wide experience came to the rescue on a critical occasion in 1805, when his workmen struck, a time when important debates were in session. Instead of closing shop, he and his sons set to the task of doing their own composing, thus saving what threatened to be an embarrassing situation.

In 1828 Luke Hansard died and the business was carried on by his son, who followed him five years later, leaving Luke's grandson in possession.

Although Hansard's Debates now had official recognition, the printed reports were often subjected to severe criticism. One publication brought in its train great controversy in 1837—the year Isaac Pitman published his new shorthand system. In it appeared an official report of the inspector of prisons, some of which Stockdale, a bookseller, maintained was libellous. Despite the fact that Hansard had published the particular report with the authority of the House of Commons, judgment was given against him. Realizing, no doubt, that Hansard was a victim of controversial legal circumstances, Parliament in 1840, after much litigation, guaranteed by statute the security of the printers.

For some years this famous printing and publishing firm passed through much financial hardship. Costs were heavy and receipts light. The main sources of revenue were limited almost entirely to subscriptions of Members of Parliament, clubs, and the Press. By 1855 the Chancellor of the Exchequer came to its assistance by authorizing the Stationery Office to subscribe for a number of copies of *Hansard*, bringing to the firm an income of about five

hundred guineas a year. But even that proved insufficient to enable Hansard to produce currently all the reports, so in 1878, by which time he employed his own reporting staff, the Government decided to make a subsidy of £3,000 per annum "to help Mr. Hansard meet his expenses".

That same year, perhaps due to this subsidy, a Select Committee was set up to investigate the possibilities of the Parliamentary Reports being taken out of the hands of private enterprise, and to be officially produced by the Government. A full verbatim report in the first person of all debates as proposed meant that Members' statements could be fully quoted against them. Many saw dangers here, which was probably the strongest influence causing the Select Committee to favour the continuance of the private venture with its less binding conditions. Since then a new word has found its way into the dictionary : to "Hansardize" meaning to confront a Member of Parliament with his former utterances, or to prove a person to have formerly expressed a different view or opinion.

For ten years no further important action was taken on these lines ; then a Joint Select Committee of both the House of Commons and House of Lords pondered on the desirability of a complete verbatim report of all the debates being made ; condensation and change of person becoming more and more unsatisfactory to Parliament and public alike. The Committee's recommendation, however, was similar to that of a decade earlier : against any radical change.

In the following year, 1889, after the business had been in his family for 115 years, Mr. Hansard sold it to a new public company known as the Hansard Publishing Union, Limited ; and shortly after the name "Hansard" ceased to appear on the Parliamentary Reports. The Union endeavoured to make the concern pay without a subsidy, but twelve months saw them out of business. Another



firm had a try, then another ; and so it went on for eighteen years, with various printing firms taking on the work under contract to the Treasury, several of them losing large amounts of money in the process.

How inadequate this chequered arrangement proved to be was revealed by further Government investigations. Printers were found to be summarizing and condensing the speeches at their own discretion, depending on length and other conditions. The only safeguard of reasonable representation was the standing order that no speech should be reduced to less than a third of its original length.

The outcome of the Select Committee's report was that in 1909 a completely new phase was entered which brought to an end all the private ventures ; and to the name " Parliamentary Debates " was added " House of Commons (and Lords) Official Report ", compiled by official reporters in the services of each House, and printed under the direction of the Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office, which method remains in operation to-day.

Though strictly speaking only a colloquialism, the name " Hansard " still stuck, until at last, on the 24th November, 1943, it was finally restored, being added in brackets under the official title. Thus it calls to mind far more effectively than the bare " Parliamentary Debates " that it owes its beginnings to the enterprise and industry of an individual.

Strangely enough, a method similar to present-day *Hansard* was practised in Rome about two thousand years ago. Plutarch in his *Lives* tells how the speeches of Cæsar and Cato on Catiline's Conspiracy to burn the city of Rome and to destroy the Empire, were taken down by " notarii " who had been placed by Cicero in various parts of the Senate.

Many similar attempts were made down the years, notably at the trials of the early Christians ; and the lack

of shorthand speed was largely counteracted by the pooling together of several simultaneous efforts.

But far more efficient and reliable is the present day *Hansard* system, which is substantially a verbatim report, written in the first person. For the two daily issues of *Hansard*, there is only a handful of shorthand-writers for the House of Lords ; but in the House of Commons there are twelve ; eleven write Pitman's shorthand at the present time, and one writes the Gregg system. It is the usual practice for one reporter to take notes at a time, working with colleagues in short relays of five to fifteen minutes ; except during question time when two reporters usually take notes simultaneously. As each reporter is taking down, he has a colleague at his side whose job it is to assist with names, and any snags that may arise. The main difficulty for these reporters is not lack of shorthand speed, but acoustics. A dropped voice, coughing, a speaker's head turned away in the direction of an interruption : these are their main problems, and that is where the spare reporter often helps.

From the chamber the notes are taken to typists, to whom the reporters dictate their notes. Then follows revision and editing, with messengers standing by to rush the script to the printers. Often parts of the daily *Hansard* are actually in print before the House rises. Such is the reputation of accuracy built up by *Hansard* that Members of Parliament are not usually called on to revise proofs of their speeches ; but they are allowed the privilege of making minor corrections, such as obvious mistakes of facts or in grammar, for the bound volumes. The editor also is allowed to punctuate, parenthesize, adjust a clumsy split infinitive, or to round off a sentence that has been left in mid-air ; but no one is allowed to make any alterations or deletions which would in any way alter the meaning of what was originally said. If there is doubt, a Member

may be requested to assist, producing his own notes if necessary. Should there arise a dispute that the editor is unable to settle, the final arbiter is the Speaker ; but such a case is extremely rare.

Howlers and queer phrases have been recorded from time to time, lending a humorous touch to the work of the reporters. One editor told that the gem of his own collection was early in this century when a member asked : " Is the Government to be cast into the melting pot to see who shall take hold of the handle of the ship of State ? "

To be correct, *Hansard* is not a Government publication in the ordinary sense ; it is entirely the responsibility of the House. Under the jurisdiction of the Speaker, the staff are appointed ; he is assisted in all the arrangements by a Select Committee of Members of the House, who are appointed annually.

For every Member of Parliament there is available one free copy of *Hansard*, which is issued in daily parts. Copies are also supplied to the various Government departments. Those University Colleges that receive assistance from the University Grants Committee, University libraries, also Public Free Libraries supported by rates, are entitled to buy copies of *Hansard* at half price. So far, few public libraries carry current copies, as the demand is so light ; but the librarian will obtain copies of specific issues if requested. If a borrower calls for an older copy of which there are no spares on hand at H.M. Stationery Office, the librarian can always apply to the Central Libraries for the loan of a file copy.

It does not seem to be widely known that ordinary members of the public are entitled to buy copies of *Hansard*, and for both Houses ; but this is so. Single daily copies cost sixpence, and can be obtained direct from the Stationery Office, or through a local bookseller. Subscriptions can be taken out. Newspaper and wireless condensations,

though acceptable enough to a wide public, are often totally inadequate to meet the needs of a specialist, who likes to see the full Parliamentary version. How much must be left out of the popular press is realized when it is recollected that a daily issue of *Hansard* is quite often fifty thousand words—half the length of the average novel. But the time is coming when a much wider public will see the full version.

Down the history of *Hansard*, by far the most important and practical endeavour to publicize the reports is now just getting under way and showing results. In August, 1944, after a year's hard work of preparing the ground, Commander Stephen King-Hall, M.P., with the assistance of a group of enthusiastic Members of Parliament and other interested parties, founded the Hansard Society. A non-profit-making organization, its aims and objects are to promote a wider interest in *Hansard* among the ordinary people in Britain, the Empire, U.S.A., and other countries; to stimulate interest in Parliamentary affairs; and to help provide schools, firms, trade unions, and associations, and so on with facilities for learning more about Parliament, enlisting membership in the Society among the widest possible reaches of human affairs.

In Commander King-Hall's own words: "... a non-profit-making Society which I am confident has a part of ever increasing importance to play in the life of this country. The Society has undertaken a task which entitles it to the support of all those who believe that the maintenance of an alert, vigorous, and esteemed Parliamentary system is one of the sheet anchors of the liberties of our people and an important contribution to the cause of world peace.

"The Hansard Society invites all those who are in sympathy with its aims and objects to apply to the Council for election either as a Member or an Associate, or in the case of an institution (i.e. a firm, school, or club) as a Corporate Member."

Already there is a rapidly growing membership, including well over a hundred Members of Parliament of all parties, and a number of commercial concerns. Since the initial efforts in 1943, daily sales of the House of Commons *Hansard* rose from 2,500 to 4,500, most of which can only be explained by this new impetus. Letters to the Society from Schools, servicemen, firms, service education officers, and members of the public prove that the work of the Society is meeting an urgent need.

Extensive plans are now in hand for publicity, including lectures, films, and visits to Parliament, the setting up of an Information Department, and premises in the Houses of Parliament. With so many important issues such as social security; extended education, and post-war reconstruction, the Society should be of great service to the community.

When Luke Hansard first came up to London from Norwich he little dreamed how vast would grow the organization which still bears his name; and though the present standard of reliability is exceedingly high, already new suggestions are forthcoming that debates should be sound-recorded, a field holding interesting possibilities.

## POETRY

### THE SEAL MAIDEN

How IT WAS dusk as they two hand in hand  
trod the dim shore by the dun grey sea,  
no ripple, no stir, no shadow of wind  
as they faded into night. Gloriously  
the full moon rose, unwinding rhyme of bells  
from the gentle stars and lulling by their feet  
the moon-daisy and the asphodel.  
Lovers, tread softly that you rouse them not  
from their light sleep nor cloud the star-splendid pool.

And he told her : " Startled, I saw you wade  
from the early morning sea, run up the beach  
with weeping limbs, a sad shining maid—  
I thought it strange in the long-finger streaks  
of the first sun you cast no shadow. I  
knew you not—did you know me? for your sadness  
fell sharply away as you greeted me  
and kissed me as a lover, crying in gladness,  
' Now at last sets the black sun of melancholy.'

" A bewildering word. When I asked you the meaning  
you shook your head. Still hoping to entice  
a word I spoke of myself : how alone in  
this empty, bare island I keep the light  
all summer long—an island so small  
there's little the salt spray in squall  
don't fly across. Dipping to share my spread  
the seagulls snap and bicker and squeal.  
I told you much. Still you were silent as the dead."

They climbed slowly to the cliff top. Strewn  
was the water with petals, a pathway

of white wonder fallen from the moon.  
And she clasped his hand and would not let it go.  
Beauty, exquisite as anemone  
that blooms in the lazy, drifting deep, too frail  
for rough wave, oh who are you? Then she told a tale  
of the King of the Sea who loved child and queen  
as his own life, and their delight was greater than word  
can tell.

Till sorrow struck. His queen, hapless girl,  
straying once from her palace of pearl,  
tarried on the white sands too long,  
seeking rare shells for her child. The tide swirled  
round her feet, at first softly, with sudden strong  
arms caught her. The storm gong sounded.  
With angry snarl and smiting thunder  
the wolf waves wild with abandon bounded  
from ledge to ledge of the isles and tore her asunder.

"A wild story for so calm a night." He stirred  
uneasily. "So still the sea, it's hard  
to dwell in wildness now. I'd sooner change it  
for the moon's quiet." Heedless of his word  
she wound him the more in her story, plaining  
bitter as it might be her woe. "So brief  
their day from the first fiery kiss to the cold  
last. Lonely in heart and crazed with grief  
he sought the cave of the sea witch and there his sorrow  
told.

"Now she was thick-foul, an oozing bog  
of treachery, and her fair cave a hell  
of witchcraft. Yet none saw this for the fog  
delectable of her magic. Cunning spells  
tricked her at will with sweet airs of smiling,

a dowager graciousness, and speech  
to match, were it for praise, reviling,  
joy or sympathy, whatever need.

All moods, all looks, all shapes were hers ; none guessed  
her wiling.

“ Thus she pitied the King, petted the child. ‘ Oh  
she is minikin, jimp and small, with blue eyes  
window-wide, sun-bright locks ! Were I  
her mother I could not dream a lovelier prize.’  
So her words, but her heart ?—of the killer whale that jerks  
an ice-flow where penguins play, to pour  
them into her greedy gulping jaw. Lurks  
no love there. But the King pried not so far ; for  
his child’s sake he asked the witch’s hand and married her.

For his child’s sake ! One night (in cloudy grave  
the moon, the sea moaning its pain) she plucked  
the deadly sea grape that hung from her cave,  
berries of aching yellow ; from them sucked  
the venom and distilled loathly make-sleepy  
brew. This by enchantment tasted mild  
and sweet, with slime of ocean crawl-and-creepy  
spiced. The princess drank. Thus the child,  
by craft and cantrip and tricks of witchery beguiled,

slept grossly till her father at peep of day,  
parting her curtains of coral bead, woke  
no princess but a seal. There she lay  
remediless, with dull sad eyes choked  
with tears, patient to suffer. The witch with sneer  
and jeer flung her from her couch. The wave closed  
as she swam hopeless away, having in no wise  
wit to parry, yet wound to feel. Each year  
since, for a night and a day, from sunrise to sunrise



she resumes her maiden form—for one lone day . . . do you listen ? ” He stared moodily. “ Enough of this yawp—’tis no time for mope and moan. Look how the night flies madly ! O let us love, my darling, before mist moves to morn.” “ Ah, morning ! ” sadly she sighed. “ Then must I break from you, with the sea rim gleaming at wake of dawn. Already the gulls, swaying down the long slopes of the air, cry Go back ! go back ! ”

Dumbly he sat and pondered, twisting this way and that his thought. “ O sink, myriad mind, whirl and sink, but one float clear that binds her to me ! Am I stripped to winter ? who but now was budding time in the burly joy of May when the first tree of summer in me flamed full candlemas, O mighty, myself new made. Once by the parched fountain when Beauty came did Beast doff his coarse skin ; again the fountain played.

“ So morning makes me Beast again.” He marked her eye, darker than winter sea. Low her voice : “ It is the black sun lights me now,” and she was away hot haste, far along the cliff, through moon-daisies, down to the shore and the long-fingered shadows. Amazed he followed with bitter heart and searching found at last a lonely seal. Awhile she gazed at him with sad loving eyes, then slid into the wave.

He rode the rough water. “ I will not rest till I claim her, dwell with her ever—” “ — where strangle-weed tangles the drowned,” hissed the witch. “ Hound him, my leaping wolves, sever his sail, tumble his craft kim-kam ! Away ! ”

She loosed their reins as the storm gong sounded.  
With angry snarl and smiting thunder  
the wolf waves wild with abandon bounded  
from ledge to ledge of the isles and tore him asunder.

And he was lost, a drop of rain in the sea.  
And the maiden? For a day and a night each year  
she haunts the empty shore, while in her ear  
his voice (as in a shell the tiny cry  
of ocean) echoes: "Dear lover, come soon,  
soon, sleep at my side, fulfil my lack!"  
"I seek you still!" she calls. But look, the dawn—  
the sea rim gleams, and the gulls, swaying down  
the long slopes of the air, cry Go back! Go back!

IAN SERRAILLIER

## TORN FROM INTEGRITY, SONG AND RESPONSE

TORN FROM INTEGRITY, song and response  
Freeze to deity and faith.  
Not these make the soul grow unafraid  
Neither the sung gods nor the quick allegiance  
But the self singing  
And the self responding.  
Only death is colder than impaling icicles,  
No life more cruel.

R. S. SILVER

# LUIGI

By G. A. WAGNER

THE REASON WHY the rabbit was called Luigi was that Jim Gardiner had once had a load of Italian prisoners on his truck, and one of them had given him a white rabbit in exchange for cigarettes. The prisoner's name had been Luigi, his dark hair and skin had contrasted with the rabbit's ice white fur, and so Luigi he had been called.

Any day in March or April of 1943, you could see hot centipedian columns of trucks worrying their way over the roads of North Africa. If you limited yourself to one of these columns, and examined one pulsing unit of the reptile of this convoy, you found Jim Gardiner probably fifth or sixth or seventh back in it, driving his Bedford with an almost affectedly careless air. He had very strong forearms and he was proud that they were sunburnt, but in stature he was a small man with a foreign mouth and mousey English hair. His eyes were at that moment on the back wheels of the truck in front. They stopped being grey blurs and became treads as the vehicle braked quickly. So he hurriedly pulled up and into the side of the road. Bit close for regulation spacing, he thought, remembering the old trick about telegraph pole spacing apart.

It was a rest then.

So the convoy stopped and became silent, and the heat shimmered the view above the radiators. And now it spilled out drivers, tall and short and blond and dark servants of the robot of this convoy.

The next act was comic.

Some of the men lit cigarettes slowly, enjoying the luxury of slow, deliberate movement. But some went to the tool box on the right hand side of their cabs, that is the on side in North Africa, unlocked them, and let out chickens of all colours and sizes. These were the pets of the drivers,

and they kept them locked up in the toolboxes all day, with holes drilled for air; it was warm there, and sometimes there would be an egg in the little hutch of straw they had made there for them.

Jim Gardiner strolled casually, whistling, to his tool box, and gently lifted out Luigi, proud of the distinction of the white rabbit, who had now been accepted as one of them, one of the pets.

And then the time came for them to move again, and the officer said, "All right. Start up. Start up again."

The drivers without pets would get their engines revving first. And then at that sound, as at a signal, the chickens would all move back to their respective trucks. It was comic.

But Luigi wasn't trained in this yet.

\* \* \* \* \*

When they stopped for a meal the vehicles concertinaed in the same way. Jim Gardiner switched off and the engine breathed deeply at the last minute, as if welcoming the rest; and then he got out on the near side.

On the off side of the road at the head of the column stood the officer. He was not stretching his legs because he was used to being cramped by now, but he began walking slowly down the line of trucks, saying,

"Switch off. That's right. Switch off. Half an hour's break here. You can brew up. Switch off. That's right. Don't close up there. Don't close up. Switch off there."

And the drivers halted, switched off, and got out quite independent of him, as though he didn't exist, as though he wasn't there at all. But they stopped at good intervals and switched off nicely and clambered out neatly and began brewing up. It wasn't obedience really, it was a routine, a ritual. Hands felt in dirty pockets for the keys of the tool boxes. Cookers came out, and soon smoke arose out of the olive trees by the side of the road.

It was always beautifully picturesque, smoke in an open

cloudless day, and the smell is terribly appetizing if you are hungry, and horribly sickly if you are well fed.

Jim Gardiner was terribly hungry. His belly low down was slightly sick with hunger, and even in the hot day he could hardly wait for the greasy food and the tea. Char. Cup of char. It was in the back of the truck, handy, just inside by the flap ; but as he passed round by the near side, by the tool box, he took out his keys very ponderously and opened it up, taking great pains, pretending more effort than it was, and let Luigi out.

"Good old boy," he said, "brew up for you, me lad."

The rabbit lay on the ground, quivering but quite warm. Jim bent down and lifted him on to his shoulder. He never picked him up by his ears, never really liked it, for all he'd been told.

"Poor old boy. Bit of a long one that, eh ? Bit giddy."

He chuckled to himself. He always liked the gentleness of this act of letting Luigi out after the journey. He had been jerking the truck about viciously for four hours, and it was nice to comfort Luigi. Poor old boy. He always looked a little bewildered at first.

They brewed up.

Jim Gardiner was a familiar sight with Luigi on his shoulder. The rabbit stained his filthy overalls very pure white, because he always kept the coat spotless.

Luigi never ran about until he had found his feet after the violent ride. You could tell when he had because his lips stopped trembling with fear, and started sniffing inquisitively with excitement. Jim Gardiner was trained in the nuance of this, and he used to show it off to his pals.

"Look there, see ? Look at the old boy. Now he's settled down, see ? Look, see ? He's kind of sniffing now. Now I know he's all right. You have to know Luigi. Great boy he is."

The tea was ready, very hot, too hot. A tin of spam had

been opened and three shared it, Shepherd and Doorless and Jim Gardiner, they always ate together. A loaf of bread between three; that was good. They were mad hungry. Jim Gardiner was busy over his mess tin. It was sooty black with frying, but quite clean. He was making a mess of crumbled bread and spam for Luigi. You had to crush it up very small together, make it tasty. Jim Gardiner knew that that was how Luigi liked it. Put a bit of tinned milk in it too.

"Come on, boy," he said, "bags of scoff here, you know. Come on here, boy."

Luigi wriggled forward.

The others, even the enormous Shepherd who was tearing and smashing the loaf up now, all stopped to watch the pantomime. They always did; they always grinned at Jim and made some comment.

"Flicker's off his grub, mate. Go on, Luigi boy. Best spam you can get there."

"He's used to flicking china, Jim. Won't eat off that. Peticuler like."

Then Jim ate.

After the meal they lay in the sunshine which was hotter, yet infinitely more pleasant, than the heat of the cabs.

Sprawled by the fires, they watched Luigi nibbling and moving cautiously about, a splash of white on the ground, and they bantered about him.

"How much for his coat, Jim mate?"

"Flicker wants some exercise you know, Jim. Losing his sylphlike curves kind of thing."

"Somebodys' mother's using Persil there, Jimmie boy!"

Then the officer said, "Start up." and Jim Gardiner picked up Luigi and locked him in the tool box again, very carefully, his last act of tenderness for some hours now.

They were off again.

\* \* \* \* \*

And some days, of course, they were strafed by the low flying aircraft. Very seldom bombed. Just machine gunned. And even this didn't happen often, nor very seriously. You just hoped it wasn't cannon.

It was impossible to get out of the truck quickly enough before a Messerschmidt came. They were too fast, and if they were clever they came behind you and the air sentries were looking at the sea or a girl's lap.

Ask anyone. They'll tell you the same. They're away before you know it. And then all the trucks pop out drivers like peas out of a pod, they're very practised in it now, and by the time the next attack comes in with its crackle of fire, they are miles away.

That is why there is the rule about 200 yards. Not more than 200 yards away, however severe the attack. Because some chaps went further and then it was hours before the column could get moving again, after they'd gone.

Some of the chaps went miles away. Jim Gardiner went pretty far, but he went for ground rather than for distance. His eyes were trained to look for the folds now, even when the air seemed peaceful, and he noticed that this often spoilt his enjoyment of the scenery.

Wonderful rock formation, good protection from blast that, bullets might ricochet though.

He was windy when this attack came in. Frankly bloody windy. He remembered the last cannon attack by Messerschmidts. They were pretty few and far between really, but this one was all over before he could get out or even stop properly. Just one plane, and one coughing rattle, pretty short, and then a longer one, and then away.

When he had gone round to the back it had been a frightful sight. Especially dramatic because it was quite silent by then. He had had a freight of troops on board, and cannon had visited them all down the offside. Those on the onside were untouched except for a hole through

someone's water bottle. But as he let down the flap a corporal jumped out. He landed on stumps because one foot had been blown off and the other was nearly off too. It was twisted round so that it looked back to front as he lay on the ground in the sun. He also had one through the genitals, so of course the blood was horrible. Jim Gardiner held him back groaning, kneeling well over his belly and not letting him see his back to front foot which was what he wanted to do. He kept groaning terribly and trying to push himself up to see what he'd got, and soon he died.

Yes, that was a mess, and thank God it very seldom happened as badly as that. Six killed and two wounded, far higher than you get in actual battle as a rule. That was what Jim Gardiner thought this time as he saw the trucks stop, then heard the shouting, and he knew it was an attack again, and he raced his engine off and ran out and ran for cover.

Brrup. Brrrup. It started just before he got down, and then they came over twice more. His truck was fifth down the line, and it was missed on the first two attacks, and then on the third he saw the canopy jump as if convulsed, and he said "Flick".

But it wasn't too bad at all, no one had been hit, and none of the trucks had been set on fire, though he could see that the one in front of his had got something through the engine.

As the officer shouted "All right," the drivers ran back again to see the damage.

Jim Gardiner tore back, leaping from hard earth to hard earth ahead of them. He heard someone say,

"Go it, Jim lad, you're winning," and someone else, "What's wrong with Jimmy boy? Been taken short?" and laughter.

He clawed at his pockets as he ran, and the others could see the glint of keys in his left hand now, shining, polished



by wear in his pocket. Then they saw him leap, with a final long jump, over the long ditch by the side of the road, to the near side of his truck, and then stumble, stumble to get his tool box open.

He examined Luigi to see if he was all right. The rabbit lay like a luxury in his grimy hand, and he was unhurt, although he was shivering a good deal.

Then he walked around to see the damage done to the canopy and chassis of his truck.

"Flicking keen on that blasted little rabbit, ain't he?" someone said.

\* \* \* \* \*

The annoying thing about the bombing attack was that the JU's weren't aiming at them. This was the first time Jim Gardiner had been bombed in convoy, yet he knew he was right. The aeroplanes were peeling off mathematically and bombing some buildings a little distance away from the road.

The yellow stone of them was leaping up into the blue air and shaking into powder just like the films, and he knew that Hans and Kurt and Johann in their cockpits weren't thinking about the convoy. But of course it was too close to ignore, and they were lying comfortably away from the trucks watching it.

Then suddenly one lot came off and they heard each scream as though it were aiming at, attacking, biting into them personally.

Then the explosion, wide and terrifying.

When they looked up two trucks had been hit really badly. Both close together and twisted and toppled together and smashed, absurdly like toys.

Jim Gardiner counted.

One, two, three, four, five.

Christ Almighty, that was his truck that had been blown up there.

He couldn't think, and started blinding towards it. He heard Doorless, who always shouted in a high voice, yelling,

"You bloody idiot, Jim. What the flicking hell are you doing, man? Get down, you idiot, oh you bickering bloody fool..."

The scream of the bomb that followed insisted like nausea on his brain.

Jim Gardiner flung himself on to the ground. God how it was pounding. There was nothing subterranean about it. It was splintering and cracking, and yet sometimes the earth was heaving in great choking sobs, and it seemed to throw him up all at once like a doll.

The earth was sobbing with him as he lay crucified on the earth. He could only see the dark colour of it. He was so angry and each time a bomb throbbed down near him he could see Luigi.

He was really angry, with futility not with hate. Now with the screeching of the bomb he could see Luigi quivering all over as though his white fur was lightning.

And then as the detonation shuddered the ground, Luigi bolted into some shape.

It was simple to watch exactly the shape, because Jim was so angry, he could see only the dark colour of the earth and Luigi like charging surf against it.

Once Luigi was smashed into an upright position. And when a nearer bomb fell he lay with his paws in front of him, in a ridiculous catlike posture.

Luigi changed into a face. Then as the bomb fell it grew longer, the face, with the mouth open now, with tortured lines on the cheeks, slung into a sideways position, groaning upwards, a Christ.

## THE EASTER OF THE EYE

GOOD MORNING to you, jocund hare,  
swift kingfisher, and newt  
nimble in stream as lark in air,  
and toad in tortoise suit.

Good afternoon, long lulling ox  
and deep-in-rose-dream-bee,  
and butterflies that make white phlox  
the grey Sweet Cecily.

Good evening, crisp occurring hawk  
and swallow-eaved, blunt bat,  
blithe midge by river, worm by walk  
and unseen, scuttling rat.

To all whose flurry signifies  
their due of day or hour  
and through their being's rareties  
complete creation's power.

And so, good night to you alone,  
within whose arms I'm free  
to love the world, from that strong throne,  
which you now give to me.

ROBERT HERRING

## POEM FOR TWELFTH NIGHT

STARVING FOR STAR-HUNG sparkle, frisky rays,  
put down, O Soul, your heart from that top branch  
it seeks to deck with edged exemplary hope.

The boughs have lost their lustre. Christmas sped  
without a bell that frolicked. Needles now  
knoll down ungiven gifts to graves that grin  
at man's one power—to tarnish tinsel stored—  
and partridge whirrs from not-long lodge of leaves  
whose shedding mocked her shape of summer-pear.

Twelve days hath Christmas. But its nights are cold,  
and nights last longest then, unthread through day,  
nor is the heart a seven-pointed star,  
beacon and bodkin. Out of place, poor gaud,  
enticed to trim a temporary tree,  
trained for its showing and, when trained, eclipsed  
by death in paper-caps and cracker-woes  
crinkling to icicles of friends' disdain.

What restoration in such frosted rites?  
The wicks revoke. Their waxen spikes annul—  
ev'n in their castled coldness, can't receive  
the hands would worship them and, doing so, melt down  
life's awkwardness from prayer.

Gift's grace is dead.

Wrap up, wherefore, the world of light. 'Tis glass—  
brittle, bought once a year, nor lasting then.  
Wrap up your heart, before the wrong winds blow,  
turning it to a small, shaped and, being so-shaped, sad  
morsel of meat, hung under arctic eaves ;

raw, used too soon ; later, too tough, too dry.

• ROBERT HERRING

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

HENRY YEVELE: THE LIFE OF AN ENGLISH ARCHITECT. JOHN H. HARVEY. Batsford. 15s.

THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY has long been recognized, in spite of much grievous tribulation, as pre-eminently the period which saw the emergence of our English character and institutions. It was the age of Chaucer and Langland, it witnessed the early growth of our parliamentary forms of government and the opening of our first really national wars. More recently we have come to understand the creative quality of the English cultural contribution of this age. If Italy has Boccaccio and Giotto, Machant, and Beauneven, we have a supreme artist in Hugh of St. Albans, John Dunstable the first great musical composer in Europe, Richard Rolle, the religious mystic, and Dr. John Gaddesden and John Arden of Newark, pioneers in medicine and surgery. Not that we should permit our national pride to lead us to an unduly insular pride, for there have been no rigid national barriers in European culture: England has been able to make her contribution largely because she has shared in the common European heritage. This is especially true of the Perpendicular style of Architecture, the English adaptation of Gothic which was developed in the latter part of the fourteenth century. That style grew naturally from the so-called Early English and Decorated Styles, both of which derive from the Continent, but it had at the same time an essentially English character. The greatest master of this style was Henry de Yevele, the subject of Mr. Harvey's study.

The author writes as an artist, but as an artist with a remarkably strong and clear historical sense, and with a virile originality which makes this a challenging and provocative work. It was written primarily for architects and the general public, but historians and archæologists

will be even more grateful to him, for they will appreciate more fully the quality of his fine scholarly and critical treatment. A great deal of competent research carried out during the last two generations has revealed a mass of detailed information about Yevele and his associates, but this has, for the most part, appeared hitherto only in technical publications. Mr. Harvey has now shown us a great medieval craftsman and architect in his true historical setting. Seldom have the researches of scholars been so happily correlated and interpreted for the benefit of the general reader as here.

The Perpendicular Style had been originated by William de Ramsey and William Hurley, King's craftsmen working at Westminster, but it was Yevele, appointed King's Master Mason in 1360, who designed its first great masterpieces and to whom its richest development is mainly due. Work known to be his survives at Westminster in the nave and west cloister as well as in the Jerusalem Chamber and Dining Hall, once part of the Abbot's Lodging; in the nave of Canterbury Cathedral, in the stonework of the reconstruction of William II's great hall at Westminster, in the Western Gate and Walls of Canterbury, and in a few majestic examples of monumental sculpture, notably the tombs of Edward III and Cardinal Langham. Much other beautiful work can safely be attributed to him, or at least to his influence, on stylistic grounds, much, alas, has been lost.

His treatment, the author believes, shows a genius for simplicity combined with beautiful composition and massing; it is characterized by complete unity of design from floor to roof and by a feeling for balance and proportion as is shown by his love for plain wall surfaces to provide a background for the clear pattern of his design. He is too good an artist to use ornament for the mere sake of ornament, as some of his successors did, but too good an

architect not to appreciate the proper relationship of decoration to building, the denial of which has resulted in the stark functionalism of much modern building.

Victorian sentimentalism about matters medieval fostered a delusion, now happily dispelled, as to the self-abnegative anonymity of workers in the "days of faith", but the author's familiarity with the work and names of several scores of craftsmen will probably surprise most of his readers. He shows, too, how such work was organized, and how much it owed to "official" initiative and guidance. Pre-eminent though he must be considered Yevele did not stand alone. The greatest of his contemporaries were perhaps William Wynford who built Winchester and New College for William of Wykeham, and Hugh Hurland, the master carpenter who constructed the roof of Westminster Hall. His influence on his younger contemporaries, Stephen Lote who succeeded him as King's Master Mason, Walter Walton, John Clifford, and William Colchester, who all worked at one time under his direction, was undoubtedly the means by which his style was continued.

This great tradition of vital building, so full of promise, real and sincere because it was a truly artistic expression of native character, employing native methods and materials, was, Mr. Harvey contends, cut short by the Renaissance which introduced a formalistic style lacking real expression, and unsuited to our English soil and climate, but above all to be deplored because it divorced the artisan from the artist. He believes that the study of this, the greatest age of architectural development in our national history, has its value to-day and should help us in our post-war planning to avoid the pitfalls of imitative and meaningless "revivalism" on the one hand, and, on the other, of that crude, unimaginative utilitarian building associated with the materialism of an age of machine production.

JOHN F. NICHOLS

THE WATER MUSIC. GLYN JONES. Routledge. 8s. 6d. THIS COLLECTION CONTAINS twelve short stories, the latest of which, *Price Parry*, has recently appeared in the *Welsh Review*. Considered as form, it and *The Four-Loaded Man* are the best. *Price-Parry* is a great cold, self-paragon of a parson, who coming down one day from his haughty family tree, discovers a splendid queen ghost in the vestry, and a revelation in his nimble little servant girl. It is folk lore and ghost story both, which is to say that it is an experience to read it, at once funny, humble, gentle, horrid, lovely, and homely. *The Four-Loaded Man*, which I compare with Yeats in *Red Hanrahan*, tells of a little girl drawing "a fire like a rose-bunch, and a wine cup, and a shooting star"; and, with a beautiful calm sharp statement it makes one believe that a little girl could; even with one crayon, which is innocence, which is imagination, which is true.

But these stories must not be considered in the persistent legend of short stories as episodes. Mr. Bates has fairly shot away that target. These Welsh stories are among those which are the lyric piece, and they must be read with poetry. Roughly, half of them are based upon such imaginative realism as *Price Parry*, the rest being strangely trance-like and still even in violence, as if the author wrote them out of his own centre and crux of being. In them Glyn Jones describes *things*, in awe, by the same understanding of the evil and the merely hobgoblin inherent in homeliness. There is a bewitched quality in age, in the hills and the weather. And I do not use such terms weakly, but as a fellow believer. Of his descriptions, he rarely makes places, builds particularity; but out of the darkness rounds a room, out of the seas, as he says, its bones. Here is the poet in a mood beyond locality, and if such pieces as *The Apple Tree*, *The Wanderer*, are not so convincing as *The Water Music* and *Price Parry*, it is because the



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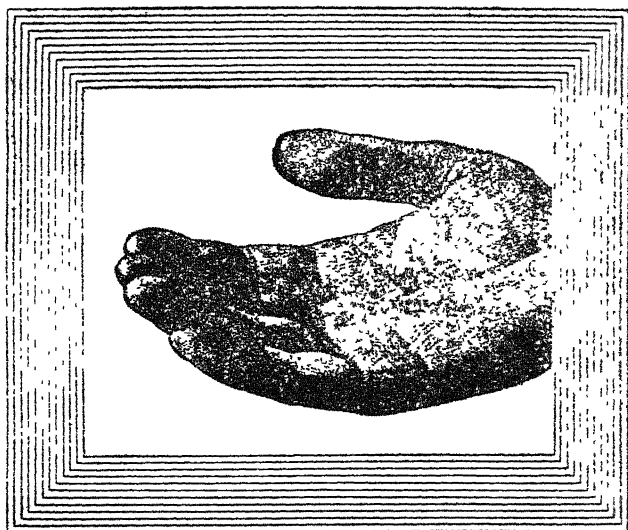
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author did not intend them to be. He is convinced himself, and these pieces are shaped as reveries. As a criticism one might venture, on the whole, to say that Glyn Jones is rounded in himself, is possibly shut in by his vision. But it *is* a vision, and as readers it is our business to get in, not to beckon him out.

His descriptions of wind and tree, water and snow, are sometimes most exquisitely exact and apt. They have been met, and not sought. If there is artificiality, it appears as in *The Saviour*, in the actual happenings, which occasionally seem to muster the people, not by character or circumstance, but by an outer will slightly, too clearly identifiable with a writer's choice of purpose. As Poirer remarks (more or less): "So-and-So was killed because he or she was such-and-such a person; and because he or she was such-and-such a person, so-and-so was the kind of person to do the killing." Which is astute. I have not quite so inevitable a sense of the complications of fate and psychology in the more dramatic of these stories; but if it is a fault, it is the poets. To a poet livingness often hinders life, or the complete grasp of life. Glyn Jones' purest art is of a profound stillness, or joyous smallness. Like his own children with old people, like his little boy, leading a powerful mare and overcoming his terror with growing responsibility and manhood. It is a paradox to speak of the limitations of vision, yet the poet is always facing just that obstacle in his view of living eventfulness. Sometimes Glyn Jones hurls himself at it with a word, a sour, or bitter phrase, ugly and pathetic. It is necessary he should do so. It is part of his effort and vitality and must be regarded as essential as long as it is *felt* to be so. For any critic to come down on such parts is to stress the mistake the author usually avoids, and more times than not the author may chuckle.

Glyn Jones has not changed. He has never posed and



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never had to alter his pose. He has made, thank God, no progress, and one might foretell for him no first or last "manner". He has not fallen for the war, for a theory, for politics. His flavour remains salty, herb-like and subtle, occasionally sharp. His vocabulary is, as his praise to his God, in *The Water Music*: patched, fertile, stippled, shaded, shadowed, inventive, and vivid: "I praise him that he is never balked, never sterile, never repetitious." He is this in words. His twinship with Yeats in *Red Hanrahan* I have unfortunately no space to prove, but it is interesting. Welshmen and Irishmen use the same tense line, the same *pause* in invention, the same mountain simplicity to indicate an age and a presence. Glyn Jones uses this discipline not only in his stories, but in their restrained number. His output is that of an artist who criticizes himself by destruction, who has probably contributed much to anonymous paper salvage, but nothing to personal pride.

MARGIAD EVANS

WILLIAM CONGREVE THE MAN: A BIOGRAPHY FROM NEW SOURCES. JOHN C. HODGES. New York, Modern Languages Association; London, Oxford University Press.

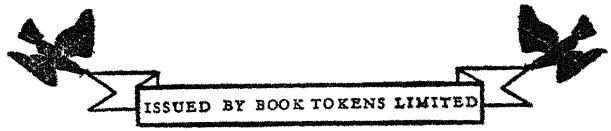
SINCE HIS DEATH Congreve has never seemed as attractive to his biographers as he was found to be by his contemporaries. Dryden, Swift, Pope, Lady Mary Montagu Wortley and many others loved and praised him for his lack of affectation, and abundance of amiability and true wit. But his biographers allowed themselves to be misled by Dr. Johnson's innuendo, by his bequest to Anne Bracegirdle and by Voltaire's racially characteristic misunderstanding of our national temperament when he considered it conceited of Congréve to wish to be visited, not for his fame, but "upon no other Foot than that of a Gentleman who led a life of Plainness and Simplicity".

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The *Dictionary of National Biography* observes, with the tartness of a *Times*’ biography, that Congreve “affected” to be a man of fashion, whereas his early retirement speaks, surely, for a shunning of that very thing, aped by others, but natural enough to one of his birth and bearing had he wished it. The *D.N.B.* adds that he was “flattered by Pope” and “favoured by the second Duchess of Marlborough”. Thus may two official words make dust of deep friendship in an obituary intended to preserve from dust its subject!

The second Duchess of Marlborough, to whom the first referred as “Congreve’s Moll”, was married to a husband, in Francis Godolphin, so little renowned for alertness of mind or interest, that it was said of him, when he attended Parliament, it mattered little which side of the Woolsack he slept, that being the extent of his attendance. Congreve himself was for ten years enamoured of Mrs. Bracegirdle, “the reputed Diana of the stage,” and as all, or nearly all, evidences bear out, like Diana, “chaste and fair.” But not so fair as to refrain from turning down Congreve, after ten years, in apparent favour of his cousin, the third Earl of Scarsdale.

These facts are there for the inquisitive to unravel, but biographers, who start with an interest, it may even be an inspiration, are apt to let it become an *idée fixe* and are rarely inquisitive enough. Even Sir Edmund Gosse, who in the worst time of Victorian sub-criticism struck such a blow for Restoration dramatists and whom I remember telling me sadly of the plays of that period he knew had been consigned to—I think, not Victorian, but Albertian, flames—even he admitted that he found the courteous, the kind, and manly Congreve “no very fascinating or absorbing human being”. Congreve, they tell us, is cold. His plays, we are informed, do not do well on the stage—though it is to the lasting credit of Miss Edith Evans and

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Mr. John Gielgud that they have proved the professors needed the corollary, "unless good actors do them."

Congreve, as a figure, has suffered from doubt as to various facts in his life and uncertainty as to motives in some of his relationships. As with Shakespeare, however, a number of helpful facts can be found if they are looked for in the right places. Mr. Hodges, in the book under review, has looked and, to start with, is able to establish both the place and date of Congreve's birth, about which Dr. Johnson was so far from kindly. Mr. Hodges does this very simply, as anyone with industry but without preconceived notions could have done. He disentangles the dramatist William Congreve from his four contemporary kinsmen of the same name, who have been mistaken so frequently for him. Further, he approaches open-mindedly his author's friendship with Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough, and is thus able to dispel the clouds that have for long hung over the meagre bequest of £200 to "poor Mrs. Bracegirdle", whilst the Duchess, at that time the wealthiest woman in England, received all his estate and bought with a part of it for £7,000 that diamond necklace and those earrings for which she has since been so reviled.

Mr. Hodges adduces evidence to suggest that the Duchess's birth of a daughter twenty years after her last child by her husband implies particular connection with Congreve, whose will, like her own later, implies a noticeable *tendresse* for correct inheritance by the girl. Be that as it may, Mr. Hodges makes clear beyond doubt that "poor" Mrs. Bracegirdle needed no endowment from Congreve, partly because she had retired from the stage twenty years before he died, refusing all offers to return, and also because Lord Scarsdale had in 1708 left her one thousand pounds, "this money to be the first legacy paid."

The theory of Congreve's pain at this defection is strengthened by the printing of a poem of which the last



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two verses have not previously been published. The first "False tho' you've been to me and love", were printed in Congreve's *Collected Poems upon Several Occasions* in 1710. The last two have until now been in manuscript only—

"But think not, Iris, tho' my breast  
A gen'rous flame has warm'd,  
You ere again could make me blest  
Or charm as once you charm'd.

"Who may your future favours own,  
May future change forgive;  
In Love, the first deceit alone  
Is what you never can retrieve."

These are the two major facts which Mr. Hodges elucidates about one of our least known great authors. He reproduces, also, eight new letters, four new portraits. He has scanned documents at the Record Office, ledgers at the Bank of England, Twinings, and the Buttery Book of Trinity College, Dublin, for the relevant years. And this with a sensibility which entitles his book to be, as he claims it, "a biography from new sources" and also a work that makes possible "a more discerning and more sympathetic reading of Congreve by bringing from fresh sources new information about the boy and the man." The value of the book is further increased by a map of the London of Congreve's time—though it may be added, as an earnest of the respect we pay to the author of two of the most brilliant comedies in the language we have the privilege to speak, write, and think, that you may look vainly to-day in Surrey Street for any plaque commemorating the house in which lived the author of *Love for Love* and *The Way of the World*.

ROBERT HERRING

# LIFE AND LETTERS TO-DAY

*continuing*

The LONDON MERCURY and BOOKMAN

Edited by ROBERT HERRING

MARCH

## EDITORIAL

1945

IT BEING IMPOSSIBLE to write about the war (" *Which war, Daddy? Why, John, the one that began after Yalta*"), readers must forgive me if I discourse in allegorical terms upon fact and, seeming to return to a previous vocation, offer them a fantasia on the theme of two little pigs.

I am cross about pigs. This may seem a change from the many forms of life, including myself, to which an editor may legitimately be allergic in wartime. Pigs are no change to me—and, apparently as far as the Government are concerned, not even small—but we have had so many books lately by or about people who with no previous farming experience, knowledge, or nous, bought an arid acre where thistles thrive and turned it into milk, honey, and authors' royalties; it may be a change, and some of us need it, to recount the experiences of one who finds that you can start with your own garden, your own cote, your own pigs—and end up with only half.

For the last few years in this country, food has been officially more nourishing, but privately nastier, of more nuisance-value and less interest. I am not comparing ourselves, in still occupied England, with those in liberated Europe. Most of the world has gone into this war—even Turkey—and may all the deprivation of life, limb, and luxuries which each land gets out of it serve to remind it of

humanity's permanent backward drag ! Leaving comparisons out of account, allow me to observe that rationing not permitting of much more than "bake, do, or end" (unless you were over 90 or under 9 months, in either of which limited events you were as free as your queueing abilities permitted to choke yourself to death on some such delicious brew as hellebore-hooch) you were, as an ordinary, tied, tested, and tamed civilian allowed to kill for your own consumption (eating, not galloping) two pigs a year. The official word is "slaughter"; that takes longer to write and helps to make sure the clerk does her full nine hours a day ; but the effect is the same. The pig or pigs has/have to be kept, and fed, on premises owned by the aforesaid, etc. ("etc." standing for taxpayer who in part keeps in wages those who word the said form—or, of course, forms).

For each pig so killed (or slaughtered), 52 bacon coupons must be given up (or surrendered). Consequently, anyone who lives alone is unable to kill for his own consumption that second pig to which he is entitled. His coupons have gone on the first. It may be said that no one who lives alone has need of more than one pig a year—but that hallucination will only be expressed by those who do not know how far, or the reverse, goes one book's ration of two chops, a pat of butter, and scarcely a passing stroke of lard. To live in a village that has no fishmonger and is eight miles from any town renders precarious subsistence unalleviated by porcine addition.

So much for theory. For practice—in July, 1943, no bacon coupons were demanded of me. In July, 1944, when it came to pig-buying time, foot and mouth disease in my district sent up prices. A porker of the weight for which I'd paid £8 in 1943, was £13 in 1944. To pay that for one animal liable to slip, break its leg, rupture, have erysipelas—all of which had happened with previous friends—

seemed too like putting all one's pigs in one basket; I paid £3 each for two Berkshire saddlebacks, three months old.

In December, I killed one, the idea being that it would carry me on till the other, killed in the next year, this March, was of a size to make the two equal the one at £13.

Unfortunately, the order for surrender of coupons came in while both pigs were tending. This being in the midst of a ration book period, my first pig took all, plus or minus some on account. This could not be helped. Neither could the other pig's growing. When that was ready to be slaughtered (or killed) the hopeful owner (myself—and a fool for being hopeful) was told that as he had not enough bacon coupons, one half of it must be sold. I live in two places, and in the one where I perforce spend most of my time, I was told the second pig's coupons could be "on account" as had been part of the first's. But in the other place I was told not so; and as that is where the pig lives, that weighed more. The taxes I pay in the two districts produce differing results.

I now give up no coupons (not having any) on condition I only keep for myself half of the pig, although technically I am allowed to kill two a year. So far, so good—or at least, so Governmental. But as this is a time when on the whole it should be welcomed if one tries to be self-supporting, is it too much to suggest that it is an instance of sixth war-year cerebral anæmic irritability that one receives so little encouragement? That it might not be too much to expect, when applying for a licence, to be told that one would have to give up half either pig number one or two, and that it seems pointless to go to the expense and trouble of keeping on No. 2 some four months longer if that and not the other is the one authority has its eye on? Since any pig, of whatever weight, only requires 52 coupons, to be, when dead, the property of him who owned it when alive, it would

clearly have paid me to have bought that other one for £13.

But then would I have had the odd £7 for savings certificates, if I'd had it? And would I not have been a capitalist, taking advantage of those who had not £13, to pay for a pig to those already taking advantage of me by asking for it?

Let there be by all means be in democracy the same law for the rich and the poor, but let equality work both ways. Till it does—down as well as up—I confess to finding that the campaign of “Grow More Food” lacks inspiration to me.

Mainly because, whatever my readers may think, my main task in a somewhat single-handed life is not even now what comes down to pig-farming for local butchers. However glad the Government may be that I Kept On Slaving, I still ask myself—quietly, but so persistently as to amount to an obsession—for what? My own sausages, or those of the girl-clerks' coiffures? I can never look at them without thinking “There goes the other half of my pig” (or carcase).

\* \* \* \* \*

*Our readers, we feel sure, will join in congratulating both Mr. Stanley Unwin on the honorary doctorate conferred on him by the University of Aberdeen and also the University itself on the recognition thus accorded not only to the recipient personally but to publishing as a factor in literature.*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT DOWN THE AGES

By J. H. BURTON

RECORDS OF HAPPENINGS of public authorities three thousand years ago are not full enough to enable them to be traced through the ages with the completeness and authority which a historian might like, but there is reliable evidence of an authentic nature in regard to the equivalent of our present local government offices and services to provide an interesting account.

Civil government goes back, in official records, for a very long time. Authority for it is found in the early Books of the Old Testament about the year 1500 B.C. Its expediency, together with statements as to qualifications and duties of the civic rulers and the subjects are set out, along with penalties, in the Books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. The former indicates the qualifications of the rulers in the words "able men, men of truth". In Deuteronomy the qualification is set out as "wise men and understanding". In the Local Government Act, 1933, section 106 (1) it is provided that "the council of every borough shall appoint fit persons to be town clerk, treasurer..." a certain similarity in A.D. 1933 to the requirements of thirty-five centuries ago.

During the period from 1500 B.C. and the start of the Christian calendar comparatively little is known. In the Gospel according to St. Matthew, chapters xvii and xxii, definite reference to the payment of toll or tribute money is found. Tax gatherers are mentioned, but the earliest specific reference to the two principal officers of local authorities of to-day—the town clerk and the borough treasurer—date back to the years 59 and 60 respectively.

St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (Romans xvi, 23), made reference to the City Treasurer. He said: "Erastus, the Treasurer of the city saluteth you." In the Authorized

Version (as distinct from the Revised Version) the word "Chamberlain" is used instead of "Treasurer". Both these designations are current to-day. Actually, the City Treasurer under his name, but not title, is alluded to a year earlier (in Acts xix, 22). Obviously the position of chief financial officer was a dignified and peaceful one. The Town Clerk's office seemed to combine the duties of chief constable with those of legal adviser and conciliator. He had to deal with unruly crowds. He is mentioned in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles (chapter xix, verse 35), and the City Treasurer is also named (in verse 22). The Town Clerk interceded in the rôle of peacemaker with a legal bias. Obviously the Town Clerk and Treasurer were officers of importance, and it would seem that they were relatively similar to the present-day appointments bearing identical titles.

Scripture does not seem to record the existence, acts, or duties of Mayors, Aldermen, and Councillors. The office of Mayor is undoubtedly an old one, since it is known to go back as far as the twelfth century. Before that time their place had been filled by Reeves. In 1189, Richard the First replaced the bailiffs of London by a Mayor, who held office alongside the Reeves or Sheriffs. In the early twelve-hundreds nine other boroughs had elected Mayors, and the practice has become fairly general by about the year 1250. It is recorded that the right to elect a Mayor had been granted to several towns before 1200, but that some towns only got that privilege centuries later. The chief duty of the Mayor was to the borough, but that of the Reeve or Sheriff was to the King.

In the early days Mayors had statutory duties of a wide and onerous character, and they were liable to penalties should they default. These tasks included the sealing of weights and measures, the supervision of the serving of ale to poor commoners at brewers' houses on Wednesday



and Saturday mornings, the pillorying of those who made unlawful bread, the arresting of people who carried offensive weapons at markets and fairs, the searching of suspected gaming houses, the control over servants and apprentices, the punishment by whipping of those who robbed orchards, and ensuring that churchwardens should enter the names of persons absent from church on Sundays.

Remuneration of a Mayor in bygone days was on what now seems a meagre scale as, for instance, that of the Mayor of Lincoln in 1535, whose council granted a tun of wine or £4 to buy it.

The duties of Mayors may be very different nowadays and no less onerous, though in other respects, yet until recently there seemed to be a growing feeling that the office was merely a social one of honour. The war has, however, shown the vigour with which these gentlemen have filled their offices during the past five years.

It is interesting to know that the two principal offices of local authorities of the twentieth century are as they were so far back as the first century. In some respects, at least, the people of 2,000 years ago were as far-seeing as those of the present time.

The Local Government Act, 1933, relating to the appointment of officers, requires the appointment of a Town Clerk and a Borough Treasurer, and insists that they shall be separate persons, independent of one another. This provision applies to all boroughs, urban district councils, and rural district councils and the offices are considered to be so indispensable that vacancies must be filled within twenty-one days after they arise.

The office of Town Clerk was not created in this country until medieval times. The earliest records seem to be those of the thirteenth century, and those records show that while his duties were not so arduous as now, his remuneration was proportionately less, in total. One is not unmindful,

of course, that whereas a pound to-day is often said to be worth only a half of its nominal value, some centuries ago it was worth a great deal.

The salaries of Town Clerks were as low as something under £2 a year and as high as £4 for that term. Authoritative records relating to the City of London show that in 1335 the salary of the City Chamberlain was £10 per annum, and that of the Town Clerk only half that figure. Even, perhaps, those figures were good in comparison with the stipend of the Town Clerk and Borough Treasurer of Ephesus in A.D. 60, since, although not indicated, one can deduce that with a pound (or whatever it was called), one could do a lot as the good Samaritan paid only twopence for the care and maintenance of a sick man for what was probably thought would be a fairly lengthy period.

The volume of work and responsibility has undoubtedly changed, as evidenced by the fact that in July, 1335, the City Chamberlain of London presented his accounts showing receipts of £326 9s.—at which time the remuneration of the office absorbed about 3 per cent of the total income of the Corporation. If present-day officers were rewarded so generously, in proportion they would pocket very princely sums each year. Instead, they get less than a tenth of 1 per cent before deduction of pay-as-they-earn income tax.

During the early years progress was slow, perhaps, if steady, until 1601, when the Poor Relief Act of that year was passed. Local authorities for centuries have had also to deal with problems other than the relief of the poor and the title given to a big statute seldom conveys the full import of the measure. For instance, the Poor Relief Act, 1601, formed the basis of the present rating system and rates still are an important factor in local government. At least, many ratepayers think so.

When the war broke out additional duties were imposed

on local authorities by Parliament. These included civil defence, food and fuel control, registration, evacuation of population (where necessary), billeting of the homeless, and the establishment of war-time day nurseries. . And all this had to be done at a time when the staffs of local government bodies were severely depleted by the calls of H.M. Forces.

If, along with the foregoing, one takes into account the fact that many towns suffered damage by enemy action, causing not only a lot of additional work and upset, but resulting in a serious falling off of their natural revenues—rates and charges for supplies of electricity, gas, transport, water, and so on, one cannot deny that these local bodies rose to the occasion magnificently, and when a few tried to show that local government had broken down it was very soon proved that nothing of the kind had happened.

It is unlikely that any local authority will or could break down, either by reason of incompetence of those at the head or in consequence of factors over which they have no control, such as enemy action, or an unexpected and unfortunate calamity. It is required that there shall be competent officers directing each separate department, and those individuals have the highest qualifications for their tasks (diplomas, ability, and experience) and are, as a whole, as near to being incorruptible as is humanly possible. Even if money failed to come in to Local Authorities the Government would undoubtedly come to their rescue—meeting a national problem out of national funds. Most local authorities have great surpluses of assets over liabilities,

In normal times, local authorities spend more than the Government, and even in war-time, when the expenditure of the latter is colossal, it is not as much more than that of local government bodies who in the same period have cut much of their ordinary expenditure, as might be imagined.

Some idea of the magnitude and importance of the

activities of local authorities may be gathered from the fact that they own and operate large utility undertakings providing electricity, gas, transport, and water, markets, cold stores, slaughter-houses, air-ports, restaurants, and cafés, together with semi-trading concerns such as housing estates, baths of various kinds, public wash-houses, cemeteries, farms, building construction and road works for builders on estates, etc. In addition, they administer many services, including education, police, fire-fighting, roadways, hospitals, sanatoria, mental homes, parks and pleasure grounds, street cleansing and sewerage, and the removal of house and trade refuse. From these operations the public derives incalculable benefits; those relating to better health, absence of epidemics, reduction and/or elimination of scourges and the like, cannot be measured intrinsically.

The two statutory offices alluded to in the opening remarks are still the two which must, in 1945, be filled by fit and proper persons. These offices may not be held by the same person or by persons who stand in relation to one another as partners or as employer and employee.

The Town Clerk and the Treasurer are concerned with the transactions of every department and every committee. Obviously their duties have increased enormously.

During the war years much has been said and written to urge Parliament to bring about reforms in local government, but nothing of a really full, comprehensive, and constructional yet practical character has yet emerged. One of the suggestions—one mooted, in fact, before the war started—was the introduction of the “City-Manager” system. Why, one might ask? It is a scheme but little understood and seems to merit some explanation. Many circumstances arise which give good cause for putting forward such a method of control. For instance, everybody, at some time or other has experienced some or all of

the following irritating and costly happenings. But, of course, they certainly are not general.

A road is newly made or re-surfaced, and within a few weeks of that event the men from, say, the electricity department come along and dig it up to lay new cables or tinker with the old ones. No sooner have they completed the task and the roadway put back, than the gas people decide to do something to their mains. The water staff, seemingly thinking that the ratepayers will consider there will be something wrong if they do not see that undertaking juggling with the roadway and the water pipes thereunder, proceed at once to dispel any such erroneous idea by taking up the road and putting it down again. Even the Government's telephone and telegraph undertaking has been known to come on the scene, not when one of the others was there, but to give a quite independent show. Finally, the paving department, viewing with horror the nasty mess into which its recently made example of the art of its craftsmen has now got into, proceeds to re-do its work.

Maybe, in some cases, there would be a visit from the sewers department and one or more of the other concerns might defer its effort at road upheaval until the paviers had relaid it a second time. Though an exaggeration when applied generally, something like the above does at times happen. Road repairs are done at the most inopportune time for everybody except the paving department. One department may be selling as scrap material what another department is buying at high prices or, even may be unable to obtain though that commodity is much needed. Perhaps each department purchases its own requirements, thus losing the advantage of large scale buying and the possibility of manufacturing the goods by the local authority itself.

If there were a controlling head, as in the case of industrial

and commercial concerns, these costly and irritating happenings would, some think, disappear. Theoretically, that may be so, and if there is wisdom in the proposition, the manager or controller must ordinarily be a paid individual, as it is improbable that any member of the council would have the ability, time, or inclination to perform the office gratuitously.

If a form of city managership on democratic, rather than bureaucratic lines would be conducive to greater efficiency and economy, lower rates, and less irritation to ratepayers, the case for its adoption is largely made, no matter of what it savours, or who it offends or disappoints. Elected members could determine policy; paid officials, the administration, and part of the organization could be a policy of public relations. This has been defined as the duty of making sure that those served are aware of what they can expect, and that if dissatisfied the defaulters will hear about it.

It is a move in the right direction. Experience shows that letting the citizen know what he is really getting and can have for the asking and that the money is being used to good advantage has made those who were unfriendly, unkind, and even abusive and antagonistic to local government, change their attitude and regard the public servant and the councillor as their guides, philosophers, and friends.

# VESTALS AND VESTRIES

## A CONTINUATION

*Being further extracts from the journal of*

FLORENCE ALICE SITWELL

edited by

OSBERT SITWELL

*Monday, 2.* I arranged all the flowers, and went with Mr. Dale into town and drove back. Mr. Douglas and Lady Byron came to luncheon. We talked a great deal about history; botany; Cardinal Newman, and the Infallibility of the Pope.

In the course of the afternoon, Lord and Lady Rollo with their daughter came, such nice people! Lord Rollo was at Mr. Chittenden's <sup>1</sup> school himself, and has sent all his boys there. They are a family of ten, and the girl who came with them is the eldest. She is just grown up, and has studied so hard that she made herself ill. I liked her very much; and look forward to going to luncheon with them this week or next.

Lady Meysey Thompson came next; and soon after Mrs. Holland and her niece. The former looks sad in her deep mourning. I watched her the whole time, trying to find out what Henry Schaeffer saw in her countenance, and to detect a resemblance to his lovely picture of Saint Monica.

I finished *Zanoni*. What a strange book. It opens to one a whole world of new thought.

*Tuesday, 3.* After an early luncheon, we all four drove to Vallauris. We bought a good deal of china, and drove home by a different road, over the mountains (much too shaky a drive for an invalid, but alas! we found out our mistake too late). Mr. Dale and I got out to walk when

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated private school of the '70's. The diarist's brother had been there.

we were about three miles from home. On our arrival we found that the axle of the carriage had been broken after we had left it, and the horses were only just prevented from running away by George's extreme promptness in jumping down and holding them. Another carriage was got, and Aunt Minnie brought home a good deal shaken and agitated.

We had the loveliest sunset I have ever seen—the sea a pure, pale gold colour, with tender, deep-blue shadows on it; the mountains a rich, mysterious purple, standing in bold relief against the sunset; and sky and sea meeting at the horizon, melting into a shadowy belt of the most fervent violet, rose-colour, and purple. This sort of scene gives one heart-ache, as well as rest, for it overwhelms one with a sense of unworthiness.

*Thursday, 5.* Mr. Dale went to Nice for the day, and found himself in the Battle of Flowers, which had not been publicly announced.

*Saturday, 7.* I walked with Mr. Dale, and sketched from the window. Sir Walter Farquhar called while we were out; and Mother and Aunt Minnie were very much delighted with him. *P.M.* A nice letter from Marie. I sketched in garden, arranged flowers, and worked at my German. We had dinner at six, as Leckly and George were going to a servants' ball.

*Sunday the 8th.* Both in the morning and afternoon a carriage was sent to take us to church and never arrived! Lovely day. I read and wrote, and we talked and sang hymns together.

*Monday, 9.* I sketched, practised, read, etc., during the morning; sketched, read, and wrote in the afternoon. Going down to the drawing-room about four p.m. whom should I see but Willy Davis,<sup>1</sup> who had travelled day and night from Rome to escape from an English girl to whom he had taken rather a fancy; but who surprised him con-

<sup>1</sup> A cousin.



siderably by (as he says) proposing to him in the street ! All his friends advised him to leave Rome at once, especially a young English woman who worked as a nurse at a Swiss hospital ("Such a good creature", he said, "she's just like a boy"). He stayed to dinner with us.

*Tuesday, 10.* A pouring wet day : but how differently one views rain in this clime ! I was quite glad to hear the pattering and gurgling sounds on waking, and to think how the parched earth would suck in the welcome drops, and bring out by next week the wild flowers in all their glory. "Thou sendest a gracious rain upon Thine inheritance ; Thou refreshedst it when it was weary."

We employed ourselves busily. I practised, sketched a vase of yellow acacia ; and read. In the afternoon Mr. Dale read aloud to us *Court and Social Life under Napoleon III*, whilst we women worked. After which I did some German, and read Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomet*.

*Ash Wednesday, the 11th.* Again it poured with rain, so I practised, did German, and read the service with Mother and Aunt Minnie. In the afternoon we all established ourselves in the boudoir for reading *Napoleon III* and working, in the midst of which Willy came, Mother having sent George Bower to look him up. He had a long conversation with Aunt Minnie about his troubles. He is evidently greatly smitten with the girl, whose name is to remain a secret to all but him, but puzzles me by saying at one moment that he believes her to be perfectly nice, and trusts her entirely ; and the next, supposing her capable of the strangest conduct ! What she said to him in the street *might*, I think, be interpreted in more than one way.

*Thursday, 12.* I read aloud Baldwin Brown's *Higher Life* to Mother (the chapter on the "Victory of Life"). It was sunny again ; and she sat in the armchair by the drawing-room window, saying that she meant thoroughly to enjoy herself.

The breakdown I had long been dreading for her came at last. She began to be quite ill; and spent the evening upstairs.

*Friday, 13.* We found that Mother had passed a bad night, and was looking very ill. She could not endure light, or sound, and was forced to be kept in a dark room. She could not go to Mrs. Holland's, so Aunt Minnie and I were forced to go without her. Old Mr. Bacon came in good time; and we three started together, and had a beautiful drive to Pegomas, which is five miles from her and situated among the wildest mountains. Mrs. Holland's house is a pretty, Swiss-looking farm on the hillside, with a small garden in front, and olive-groves and fields full of wild flowers, then in bud, round it. She and her niece were leaning over the balcony watching us as we drove up, and welcomed us most heartily. The drawing-room is small and sunny, with a lovely view and full of pretty things. I watched Mrs. Holland a great deal, and came to the conclusion that I liked her. After luncheon she took us all over the house. The views of mountains from the upstairs rooms are what the French would call *ravissant*. Her niece went out with me, and took me to see our Blanche's home; for the whole family was transplanted from Belgium to Pegomas by Mrs. Holland, and nearly every member of it serves her in some capacity. It was a tiny little house, but very clean and pretty. The only one at home was a sister of Blanche's, with a most gentle face and manner; quite unlike our bright, noisy, quick-tempered little Blanche. We next went, Miss Teck and I, to a most beautiful valley, celebrated in a little book by the name of the Magic Valley; and a wilder place I never saw. It made me think of some of the descriptions of mountains and valleys in *The Lady of the Lake*. Old Mr. Bacon came with us some way; but left us at the entrance to the valley, to wander about among the wooded paths by himself, where

every spot reminds him of his lost wife. After gathering some ferns and a few anemones for poor Mother who was uppermost in my mind the whole day, we returned to the farm just before starting home.

We found Mother still very ill, and obliged to keep quite quiet. She could not bear anyone to sit with her.

*Sunday, 15.* To church with Mr. Dale, and to the Woodall's afterwards. I sat a great deal in the dark with Mother, which was much the nicest place to be. In the evening her illness turned to distinct malaria in an ague form. I wrote to George.

*Monday, 16.* Mother is rather better. Mr. Dale and I made up medicines for her, and after sitting with her and waiting on her, he and I went out together. I bought her a bird, which seemed to please her.

*Tuesday, 17.* Mother is better. Aunt Minnie and I called in a carriage at the Pavilion for Willy, and we three drove to Chateau Coste at the top of Cap d'Antibes, to lunch with the Rollos. I like Lord Rollo the best of them; but they are a nice family, though singularly plain.

*Wednesday, 18.* Mother to my surprise came down to breakfast, looking exceedingly unwell; and I wished she had stopped in bed.

*Afternoon.* I wrote to George and Mrs. Pimkins, and drove with mother and Mr. Dale. A letter for me from the Archdeacon gives a good account of Edith and Walter, who are recovering but have kept their rooms ever since we left home. *Evening.* I read *Life of Mahomet*.

*Thursday, 19.* Mother looked to me all day very ill. Mr. Dale orders her as much fresh air as she can get; so we three went out early driving. In the afternoon I walked with Mr. Dale, read, and then arranged flowers. The evening passed much as usual, except that Mr. Dale and I took a little walk on the terrace in the brilliant moonlight. Being in a jocose frame of mind, nothing would keep him

from singing at the top of his voice, till I felt as if I were at a *café chantant*, and beat a retreat.

*Friday, 20.* Another of those sweet bright days which are so common here and so rare at home. I arranged flowers in the morning.

The news of the explosion in the Winter Palace reached us directly after luncheon, and greatly thrilled and horrified us. Mother rested in the boudoir whilst Willy and Aunt Minnie drove together, and Mr. Dale and I went for our favourite walk over the hills. It was a very sad walk. He made me miserable by speaking most seriously of Mother's health and saying that he thought her constitution very much broken, and feared that she might altogether break down after he had left us.<sup>1</sup> On our return I sat with her, reading. She suffers very much from her eyes during the evenings, and goes to bed early.

*Saturday, 21.* Drove with Mother, Aunt Minnie, and Mr. Dale to Cannet and back. Cannet is two and a half miles from Cannes, and is a quaint old town, thoroughly Italian in character, perched up among the hills. The view from it of the mountains, the town of Cannes, and the silvery sea, is exquisitely beautiful. We bought some scent at Ardisson Mallet's factory. On our return we read aloud the articles and letters in *The Times* about the explosion, and in the evening had quite a fight with Mr. Dale on the subject of Nihilism.

*Monday, 23.* Mother was not so well again, for the fever had returned in the night. I sketched and walked into town with Mr. Dale. Mr. Beaumont called; and Willy came to luncheon and stopped to tea. Mother, Mr. Dale, and I drove into the town on business, and from thence on to *La Croisette*, from which there is a beautiful view of the Estérel and old town.

We passed the villa which the Empress lately occupied.

<sup>1</sup> She lived for a further 31 years, dying in 1911.

It is a large square house facing the sea, with a great umbrella pine in front of it. We watched with some curiosity strange, ill-shapen clouds peering above the hill-tops, and tossing out gaunt arms from the main body now in this direction, now in that, and clearly heralding a storm. By six-fifteen it came, and *such* a storm ! The flashes of lightning would have been almost terrific if they had not been so beautiful. Sheets of mauve and orange light revealed the whole range of Estérel mountains time after time ; forked lightning seemed to cross the sheet ; and once a fireball appeared. Then the hail came down, making almost more noise than the thunder, and seeming to bring the house down over our heads. Leckly came rushing in during dinner bringing us soup-plates full of hail-stones for inspection. They were mostly larger than ordinary nuts, and many of them nearly the size of walnuts.

24. A charming letter reached me from Edda to me, and one from Grace to Mother, announcing the birth of Bessie's baby<sup>1</sup> last Tuesday. It is a little boy ; which will please them very much.

25. Mother, Aunt Minnie, Mr. Dale, Willy, and I drove to Grasses in the morning, and were delighted with the loveliness of the country, and the first crimson anemones peeping out among the green grass by the roadside as we drove. Grasses is a quaint and interesting town at the foot of mountains, with tall, narrow streets ; so steep and so narrow often that no carriage can drive in them. We lunched at the Hotel de la Poste, after which we saw Bruno Court's distillery, and bought some scents. In the evening Mr. Dale read the paper aloud to us, and I read the whole of *Deborah's Diary*, an interesting little book lent me by Mr. Bacon, giving in the form of a story many details about the life of Milton. We went to bed, but were

<sup>1</sup> The late Mr. Reginald Farrar, the distinguished botanist and writer.

all roused at two in the morning by the ringing of a bell and hurried footsteps ; and then Mr. Dale's voice next door to me saying, "I'll come directly," while outside on the gravel walk the messenger paced up and down—up and down—it seemed for ages, though it could only have been a few moments, till Mr. Dale joined him and they went off together. We guessed it was illness, but we were not prepared to hear that it was death, till Mr. Dale told with a haggard face next morning that he had found Major Foster gone before he arrived there—dead, after twenty minutes of intense pain, of the very same heart-disease from which Mr. Dale is suffering. Mr. Dale returned soon after breakfast to the widow and children, anxious to help them in any way that lay in his power ; and Mother and I drove, picked him up in the course of the morning ; and we all three went to church for the Holy Communion.

In the afternoon Mother, Willy, who was here for luncheon, and I were to walk into the town to meet Mr. Dale. We went at the appointed time, but after walking for twenty minutes about the Rue d'Antibes without seeing Mr. Dale, we came back again. Willy opened out very much and told me a great deal that was interesting about the Pyramids and about spiritualism.

*April, 1880.* . . . Not a word written in my journal for so long, and so much has passed.

George came out to Cannes for some little time. He was not well, dear old boy, and Mother and I were anxious about him altogether—about his opinions especially. Easter was too lovely. I made with Nurse's help, a wreath of white flowers and maidenhair ferns for the church, which looked exquisite, the arches traced with great palm branches ; the font wreathed with white roses ; wreaths of flowers everywhere ; and the porch covered with flowering eucalyptus.

On the 17th of April, Saturday, Aunt Georgie and Lucy

arrived, to take our places with Aunt Minnie ; but we had a few days together first. We had made the room look bewitching for their arrival, with flowers everywhere, and fresh strawberries on the tea-table. Lucy had my room. I slept in Lecky's bed, and she on the boudoir sofa. We were much put about by finding centipedes of huge size two nights running in Aunt Georgie's room, and just when we had set our hearts upon her thinking Cannes the most delightful place in the world.

But the next two days were days never to be forgotten. The loveliness was perfectly unearthly ; and beyond what one could ever dream of. Early, very early, on that Sunday morning, one woke to hear such a chorus ! The nightingales had all arrived in a body from Africa, and never ceased to sing, day or night.

While I was dressing, the loveliest of white sails flitted past, on the soft blue sea, with the Estérel dreamy, and shadow-like behind. I seized up a pencil and have still got a scrawl which I do not like to destroy, for the sweetness of the recollection it awakens. Then the long spiders' webs, glistening in the sunlight and stretching from branch to branch of the dark fir trees. Blanche rushed as usual bustling into our rooms : " *Bonjour, Madame ! Les rossignols sont venues : le temps, oh, le temps est magnifique !* "

We went to church, and had long talks in the house, and wandered about the sunny garden.

Monday was if possible more lovely still. Never, as long as I live, shall I forget the unearthly loveliness of those last days at Cannes, with the wild, thrilling songs of the nightingales day and night !

Monday morning the others went out driving, but I stopped in to get a last sketch from the dining-room window. (I had been having drawing lessons from Monsieur Pinotti, who helped me on a great deal.) Three

visitors arrived ; quite unexpected ones—Lyulph Swinton, Mr. Ponsonby, and a Mr. Hanbury, with whom they were staying, near Mentone. They only had come over for the day, and soon had to leave.

In the evening we nearly cried at having to leave the dear Allegría. Next day Mother and I started, and travelled very hard. We stayed in London at Aunt Freddy's ; and I had the great pleasure of seeing my Maggy twice. She came to see me on Saturday and we sat in the same chair ; and had the first talk alone together for five years. She had developed greatly in mind and character. On Sunday, we met for one short minute in the street. On Monday, 26th, Mother, Grace, and I returned to Scarborough.

On the tenth of July Mother and I went up to Lambeth. We found them all having tea in the garden on our arrival, dear Aunt Chattie amongst the number. The house was chiefly filled with Wakes of all ages and sizes, this time. The weather was very close and made one feel so stupid. We saw the pictures, and Howell and James. One morning I sketched at Westminster Abbey with little Miss Simkin, after which she and I hurried home to Lambeth in a thunderstorm, and she stayed some little time to see us. In the afternoon my Maggy arrived, and she and Mother and I sat close together for some time, talking of many things, especially of Mr. Bradlaugh, whom Maggie did not think could be justly excluded from the House. Mother thought differently.

Then, having got on politics, Mr. Gladstone and Lord Beaconsfield's respective merits were discussed. Maggie is a strong Liberal by conviction. I wonder if she will ever change ! She took up a little book on the table called *Work Amongst Working Men*, by Ellice Hopkins, and said how very good she thought it, and what a good and clever woman she thought the writer. Then she talked about her friend, Lady Aberdeen (who was Ishbell Marjoriebanks),



and said, "She is without exception the best woman that ever lived."

I took Maggy upstairs to tea in Edie's sitting-room, where we found quite a bevy of visitors, chiefly Selfes, and Edie, at the tea-table in a little white cap, looking so fair and sweet.

Next day Leck and I went up the river in a penny-steamer, did a little shopping, and then I was dropped at Maggy's at the house they then had for a short time in Lower Seymour Street. I was shown up to her own little sitting-room, which opened out of the drawing-room. Lady Donoughmore came in for a minute, and Colonel Tremayne, but except for these interruptions we were left undisturbed. She showed me her drawings and I saw her books—a book of Dr. Vaughan's which Aunt Georgie had given her many years ago at Weston.

Edie was looking more like an angel than ever that visit, but so delicate, that we often feared she might be taken, like Crauford.

One day I went with her to her district, and shall never forget the interest of it. We brought the poor people bunches of flowers, which they were immensely delighted with. It was a very poor part, and some of the poor people had had such sad stories, and yet they looked, many of them, bright and happy, as if they really knew the peace of God which passeth understanding.

I don't think we could have seen as much as usual of the Archbishop that visit, but I do remember at breakfast one morning his saying in a loud and distinct voice: "The Government is making itself perfectly ridiculous!" It was the morning after the refusal to admit the Prince Imperial's monument into Westminster Abbey.

The Archbishop, we found, had promised his girls that they should go to an opera for the first time in their lives, if Mother would chaperone them; so we went together to

*I Puritani*, at the Covent Garden Opera, and heard Albani sing deliciously. Then another night we went to the *Merchant of Venice*, and saw Irving act Shylock and Miss Ellen Terry, Portia. It was wonderful.

And one morning we had a great clergy breakfast, which amused us very much. I sat next to the Dean of Lincoln. In the middle of breakfast the Archbishop said to me across the table: "Florence, will you move your chair a little, for we are going to be photographed, and your back hair hides my face." So I did as I was bidden, and we were all photographed.

The last morning I had a nice talk with Edie, about George Eliot's books—*The Mill on the Floss* particularly—that is to say, Edie did the talking, and told me about it. When at last Mother and Grace and I were in the carriage, just before leaving the door, Edie rushed up with roses in her hands for us, looking so sweet that one cannot forget her face as it appeared at that moment.

In August we went to Renishaw for a party—Aunt Minnie being with us, the Archbishop, Aggie, and Lou amongst other visitors, and George's friend, dear old Mr. Bonamy Price.<sup>1</sup> I had heard much of him from George, and was anxious to see him. I remember his coming into the room and beginning, almost first thing, to rub the dog's back up the wrong way. Then he went off about some little joke into one of his great laughs, which once having heard, one can never forget. Shortly after, he and George and Willie and I strolled out together into the garden, and sat under the Spanish chestnut in the White Walk. He told us in the course of conversation that a most wonderful answer had once been given to him by a woman, to a question he had put to many men without receiving an answer. The question was, "What is it that makes man

<sup>1</sup> Bonamy Price, 1807-1888, economist, Drummond Professor of Political Economy at Oxford, 1868-88. Wrote chiefly on currency and banking.

substantially to differ from the brutes ? ” and Mr. Bonamy Price, with a talent, peculiar to himself, I think, managed to spin out his story, keeping us every moment on the tiptoe of expectation. Now at last he is going to give us this answer—this answer which has been admired by all : which has been repeated at public meetings in England and America : this answer, of which a great man has said : “ It is as deep as it is true. ” We listen breathless. The answer is contained in two words : “ Progressive Desire. ”

One afternoon we had a garden party. Mrs. Hamilton Grey was there ; and she and Mr. Bonamy Price, finding out that they were made of the same stuff, sat close together nearly the whole time, and looked most comical, with their dear old heads close together, and their long noses nearly touching. So they nodded to each other, and talked of things in heaven and earth ; and sometimes one of Mr. Bonamy Price’s irresistible laughs set us all laughing too, as they always did, whether or not we knew the cause.

One evening George and Willie had a question to ask, relating to political economy, and delivered with all fitting gravity, though the corners of their mouths looked suspicious. It was this. Lord B., a rich and stupid boy at Eton, couldn’t do his Latin. C., a clever but poor boy, did it for him in return for payment. Now was not this entirely consistent with the theories advocated by political economists ? Was it not right that Latin verses should be produced where they could be produced most cheaply and easily ?

The dear old man was utterly delighted with this piece of mischief, and laughed enough to have kept us all in good spirits for the rest of the evening.

He is a great talker, as all the world knows. One day he informed us that the only person in the world who could talk him down was his own wife.

Altogether he was like a strong, fresh, sweet breeze,

purifying all with which it comes in contact. His child-like reverence struck me as something very beautiful. The last morning at breakfast, after giving us a somewhat ludicrous account of a visit to the Holy Land, and the strange remark of young American ladies who helped to form the party, such as "Bethlehem's awful jolly", he suddenly changed his tone, said how strange it was to see the very places where our Lord had been, and said, with face and voice full of reverence: "It was very touching—very touching."

# THE THISTLE IN THE LION'S MOUTH

NOTES ON THE POETRY OF HUGH MACDIARMID

By R. CROMBIE SAUNDERS

TO ANYONE WHO, after making an intensive study of English literature and encouraged perhaps by his reading therein of Burns and a few pieces by the Makars, moves on to an equally thorough knowledge of Scottish literature, it comes as rather a surprise to find that he is studying a completely different thing. For, leaving aside entirely the great field of Gaelic literature, it is remarkable how different in essence, in spite of their common linguistic origin, the Scottish and English traditions prove to be. Shall we say (with the usual apologies for the terms) that the English tradition is a romantic and the Scottish a classical one? But even England's great classical poets, the Neo-Augustans, are quite different from the classical poets of Scotland, and it is as absurd to think of Scotland producing *The Rape of the Lock* as to imagine an English poet writing *Kynd Kittok*. When we consider more typical periods in English literary history, when the poets spoke with a more characteristic unrestraint, the distinction is naturally more marked, and one has only to think of the greatest flowerings of the two countries, the Elizabethans in England and the fifteenth-century Makars in Scotland, to realize fully how opposed, and perhaps complementary, the two cultures are.

In her poetry England never approached more closely the spirit of Scotland than she did in Chaucer, and her subsequent development, after an interval during which Scottish poetry reached its greatest maturity, followed a path which was dictated by her racial characteristics and reflected in the development of her language. English became more fluid and suggestive; Scots became more rugged and precise. To suit the needs of a race that is fundamentally religious and poetical, English became a

vocalic language, full of romantic overtones and a fit medium for poetry of the "generic" kind. Scots on the other hand, developed by a race that is fundamentally materialistic and philosophical, remained consonantal and specific. The distinction need not be pursued; it is clear how Scots poetry, unlike English, is essentially a formal poetry, and this despite the unfortunate and quite unrepresentative things that have been done with it by second-rate poetasters of the last century, labouring under the impact of the alien and powerful English tradition.

This loss of direction in Scottish poetry, which it may be hoped the new consciousness of Scottish writers may correct, was helped by the remarkable neglect by Scotland of her cultural inheritance. While England preserved her inferior poets with as much care, and sometimes with an equal enthusiasm, as she did her best, Scotland was so indifferent to her own products that Mark Alexander Boyd, who died in 1601, is remembered for one poem alone, and yet that is one of the greatest sonnets in the world. In her Gaelic literature the neglect is still more marked. When Alexander MacDonald (Alisdair MacMhaister Alisdair) and Duncan Ban MacIntyre died, *in the eighteenth century*, the greater part of their work perished with them.

Nor has any effort been made to familiarize the Scottish people with the large body of work which, thanks to the efforts of such organizations as the Scottish Text Society, still is available. In too many schools and universities Scottish literature still consists of Burns, Scott, and Stevenson, and even there the emphasis is generally mislaid. The lack of attention given in Scottish universities to poets of such stature as Dunbar, Douglas, and Henryson is extraordinary. Usually the Middle Scots Makars are grouped together and treated under the general, and misleading, title "the Scottish Chaucerians", to fill in the unfortunate gap between Chaucer and Spenser in the English course.

The Scottish writer, then, has for a long time had two major obstacles in his path : a severance from the tradition of which his work should form a living part, and a subjection to standards of criticism which evolved alongside a literature of different character and pursuing different ends from his own. To break down these obstacles required an individual and sceptical approach to current ideas, or an excessively stubborn determination to be different. In the man who has made the Scottish revival possible, both these forces operated.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hugh MacDiarmid made his first appearance with innocuous little imitative poems in the Georgian manner. One would have said the knack of versification was there, a desire to be a poet and a notion that it could be achieved by imitation ; but little else. However, a change occurred when MacDiarmid turned to the Doric. His first poems in Scots appeared sporadically in the *Glasgow Herald* and other journals, and served to show up rather amusingly the lamentable state of so-called criticism in Scotland. There was the 'usual apologetic approval with which Scotland damns her native genius. One critic, of some academic qualifications, wrote in *The Scotsman* : "... there are certain pieces of his which raise him above the common level of writers in dialect—above (in the writer's opinion) Mr. Charles Murray. He has, it is strange to say it of a dialect poet, a certain high seriousness which Mr. Murray never attempts."

Actually these poems, as became more generally apparent when they appeared in the volume *Sangschaw* in 1925, are a most remarkable achievement. They are in and of the best Scottish tradition, but at the same time original and even revolutionary both in form and mood. Two things strike one immediately about these poems : the freshness and novelty of MacDiarmid's rhythms, and the manner

in which the mysterious and the commonplace are reconciled. The experience is unusually comprehensive—the Earth is seen as a “bare auld stane” that “Glitters aneath the seas o Space, White as a mammoth’s bane”, but the austerity of this conception does not contradict the cottage interior with its “cradle on the ca’, A muckle bleeze o cones, An mither fochin scones”. The subtlety of rhythm with which some of these poems are constructed results in something which is unique in literature.

“I’ the how-dumb-deid o the cauld hairst nicht  
 The warl like an eemis-stane  
 Wags i the lift;  
 An my eerie memories faa  
 Like a yowdendrift.  
 Like a yowdendrift so’s I couldna read  
 The words cut oot i the stane  
 Had the fug o fame  
 An history’s hazelraw  
 No’ yirdit tham.”

The poise of such verse is excellent. To attempt to scan it would be ridiculous, but it is not in any sense “free verse”. The rhythm is inevitable, and the form and content inseparable. MacDiarmid has no favourite metres, the stanzas growing organically with their own life, and the texture of the verse, resilient and delicate, follows the thought with great fidelity.

There is a fine intensity and directness about these early poems. Scots has always been capable of expressing the maximum of tenderness without any trace of sentimentality, and MacDiarmid exploits this power of the Doric unforgettably in the two short poems which follow (from *Penny Weep*, published in 1926).

#### EMPTY VESSEL

I met ayont the cairney  
 A lass wi towsie hair  
 Singin till a bairnie  
 That was nae langer there.



Wunds wi warlds tae swing  
 Dinna sing sae sweet.  
 The licht that bends owre aathing  
 Is less taen up wi't.

THE LOVE-SICK LASS

As white's the blossom on the rise  
 The wee lass was  
 That 'bune the green risp i the fu' mune  
 Cannily blaws.

Sweet as the cushie's croud she sang  
 Wi'r wee reid mou—  
 Wha sauch-like i the lowe o luve  
 Lies sabbin noo !

In the same year as *Penny Wheep* MacDiarmid also published *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*; a long poem of some three thousand lines, dedicated to Francis George Scott, the composer. In this "gallimaufry", one of the richest and most successful of MacDiarmid's works, the poet is depicted seated on a moor after an evening's heavy drinking, contemplating a thistle with his "bodily sicht" and the spirit of his native land, in all senses of the term, with his "keethin sicht". Although it starts off shakily (on page 1, "one" is "yin", on page 2 it is "wan", and on page 3 virtue triumphs with "ane") the language soon reveals a new flexibility and richness. There is something of the vigour of Dunbar: "In wi your gruntle then, puir wheengin saul, Lap up the ugsome aidle wi the lave," there is a fine sensuous magic in a passage adapted from Blok, and the profound and moving "O wha's been here afore me, lass?" is followed by a violent and characteristic transition into the realm of (perhaps) defensive toughness of "Millions o women bring forth in pain Millions o bairns that are no worth haen". Typical of the *eclat* which illuminates the poem is the employment with genuine dignity of two of Scotland's most ridiculed place-names in two successive lines:—

“And as at sicna times am I,  
I wad hae Scotland to my eye  
Until I saw a timeless flame  
Tak Auchtermuchty for a name,  
And kent that Ecclefechan stood  
As pairt o an eternal mood.”

MacDiarmid's next long poem, *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930) was a very uneven affair. It is, in fact, nearly impossible to read through it, owing to the indiscriminate way fragments and complete poems, of varying merit and tone, are thrown together. But there is much of excellent quality in the book. The poem *North of the Tweed* has the same directness as the short lyrics, and that strong nostalgia that is far more than mere nostalgia and that MacDiarmid has since and so unwisely decried. A rather free adaptation from Rilke into English is dignified, but of no great intrinsic distinction.

The *First Hymn to Lenin* and *The Seamless Garment*, published in the following year, are (*pace* MacDiarmid !) poems in a lighter *genre*. They are good of their kind, particularly the second, but the thought is argumentative rather than imaginative, and the difference in power which that means can be seen by comparing them with the short poem *At My Father's Grave* in the same volume, which is very much more ambitious than either of the didactic poems, and yet more successful. This is an important point in view of MacDiarmid's subsequent writings, but before it is enlarged upon mention must be made of some of the poems in *Scots Unbound*, published in a limited edition in 1932. First there is *Milk-wort and Bog-cotton*, one of Scotland's greatest lyrics and perhaps the finest MacDiarmid has written. It has the same sinewy beauty as Boyd's sonnet *Cupid and Venus*, to which reference has already been made, and if it had taken sonnet form might have been coupled with the Boyd poem in Pound's verdict

on the latter as the greatest sonnet to have come out of Britain.

Another very fine poem in this collection is the difficult but rewarding *Depth and the Chthonian Image*, a moderately long poem of the sort it was supposed to be impossible to write in Scots. The Scots is not as pure as in the short poems, but is more consistent and rich than in, for example, the *First Hymn to Lenin*, which is a hybrid production, philologically. One poem here, though, is in a Scots that is liable to panic most unprepared readers. *Water Music* began, MacDiarmid tells us, as a sort of *tour de force*, exploring the onomatopoetic possibilities of the enormous Scots vocabulary in depicting the streams by which the poet played as a child. In the event, however, the poem has become something with an extraordinary magic. The strangeness of the words (all of which are genuine except for four which occur in one line) and their remarkable musical and evocative qualities produce the feeling that one is looking at a familiar kind of scene for the first time or in quite a new way. Without any coining of words, MacDiarmid achieves a Jabberwocky beauty :—

“ Bracken, blaeberries, and heather  
Ken their amplefeysts and toves,  
Here gangs ane wi aiglets jinglin,  
Through a gowl anither goves.”

How Scottish to reach into the Carrollian Wonderland without taking one's feet off Jamieson's dictionary !

*Harry Semen*, which appeared in the *Modern Scot* in 1933, was disturbing because one suspected a slight intention to shock ; and it was clear that if the poet were to become too consciously concerned about his relationship with the reader and the effect of his work, the integrity and purity that informed the earlier poems would be gone.

With the *Second Hymn to Lenin and Other Poems*, published in the same year, MacDiarmid deserts the Scots,

and fine as some of the English poems in this book are they have not the distinction of his Scots verse. In fact, MacDiarmid deserts more than the Scots at this point, and fully to consider the implications of his subsequent reorientation would require more space than this essay will permit. However, a few aspects of it may be mentioned in conclusion.

First, it must be realized that, despite the fact that he achieved at the start of his career what many great poets are glad to spend a lifetime approaching, MacDiarmid had not reached a cul-de-sac. On the contrary, as *Depth and the Chthonian Image*, *Water Music*, and *Harry Semen* all show, he was creating a Scots that was adequate for the most varied demands; and just how profound was his insight (poetic and intuitive in the most precise sense) into the paradox of life had been shown in many of his other poems. But the *First Hymn to Lenin* showed a displacement of intuitive thought by argumentative thought, which later became the replacement of wisdom by information; in *Harry Semen* and some other poems, there appeared a hint of personal intrusion which later became aggressive egotism; and the abandoning of Scots in and subsequent to the *Second Hymn to Lenin* was a not unnatural corollary, in so far as it might have appeared to promise a bigger audience.

But MacDiarmid has here discarded his three most valuable attributes. What makes the Scots poems so outstanding is their emotional power (and he is essentially a poet, not a logician); the detachment which gives them their universality; and the perfection of their form and language (for he is a great miniaturist and here employed a speech which was the very heart of his poetic experience). It is not a question of the case for and against lyrical poetry: it is a question of the case for and against poetry. Or, to be more accurate, a question of what we mean by

poetry ; and MacDiarmid's lengthy exposition of his aims in *Lucky Poet* (" The Kind of Poetry I Want ") does little to clarify the issue. If poetry exists, as MacDiarmid maintains, when thought is at a certain high level of intensity, there can be little doubt whether the title is more deserved by *The Eemis-stane* and *Milk-wort and Bog-cotton* or by the verbose and inchoate " Poems of prodigious observation and alarming chic " of the later period. Of course, poetry is more than that, and such a definition is surprising in one who has written poetry so supremely. For MacDiarmid is undoubtedly one of Scotland's most important poets—and his reputation will be secure as such, whether his work be considered historically as the recreation of a literary Scots, or for its own intrinsic merit. It is impossible to exaggerate in either respect the service he has done his country and its traditions.

## GLOSSARY

Aiglets : points	How-dumb-deid : the very dead
Amplefeysts : idiosyncrasies	of night
Bairnie : baby	Lift : sky, firmament
Cairney : hilltop	Lowe : flame
Croud : moan	Mou : mouth
Cushie : cushat dove	Rise : bough
Eemis-stane : insecure stone	Risp : grass
Faa : fall	Sauch-like : willow-like
Fochin : turning over	Tousie : dishevelled
Fug : moss	Toves : moods
Goves : comes angrily	Wunds : winds
Gowl : glen	Yirdit : buried
Hairst : harvest	Yowdendrift : swirl of snow
Hazelraw : lichen	from the earth

## POETRY

### POEM ABOUT VULTURES

BETWEEN THIS OVERHANGING mountain and the half-crazed  
air,  
blank where the climber's rocky fingers grate and haul,  
over our shoulder, glancing backward, look !  
elusive shadows of vast birds no longer there.

And all across the map behind us  
on promontories or abandoned trees  
lurk, shifting or invisible, those craggy wings.

While the sun takes long strides  
between us and the mind's desire,  
and foothold scatters down in shale  
and stones, a loosening of the will,  
clouds shut and open, cold wings sprout  
airily between the shoulder-blades.

And upwards the circles of our eyes  
advance  
across thin earth and rock,  
like daisies,  
mockery too sparse

for what ignores us while day lasts :  
the impersonal claw, the savage beak.

EITHNE WILKINS

PIECE FOR AN OCCASION WITH  
VIRGINALS

WHEN GREENSLEEVES WAS all my love—  
Fair lost, fair fickle Greensleeves—  
A raven world my heart tore out,  
And how should I find her, seek her out  
With indecorous songs of pleasure  
Who lacked all beat and measure  
Of his red heart torn out ?

And now that in my cave of ribs—  
Fair found, fair constant Greensleeves—  
Something stirs in joy in gladness,  
How shall I forget the sadness  
Of years like jangled verses and contrive  
With pumping heart to live—  
Besides her songs seem empty now, poor Greensleeves.  
EWART MILNE

PERSONALIZATION OF A THEME OF  
BLAKE

“ O Rose, thou art sick ! ”  
*Songs of Experience.*

THIS MUCH IS done, our greeting  
was valediction : such is the sunlit rose  
retaining her warm bed  
for the lecherous worm.

The face is forgotten, and soon  
the voice is not heard again  
and the flowers are thrown  
away, and the vase is broken.

Yet a glance or a word  
will persist on occasion, and sometimes  
a small joy will possess me :  
a dead petal upon the shaded floor.

JOHN ORMOND THOMAS

## TORTOISE IN WARTIME

THERE WERE MEN in khaki, girls in uniform,  
Sitting at the tables in the bland summer air  
On the café terrace. Overhead the balloons  
Went nosing into the west like silver fish.

Was that a siren ? No, only a car.  
A pity we missed the one o'clock news.

Out from the bed of asters a tortoise peered,  
Waving his horny neck from side to side ;  
With neat precision, on mincing feet set out  
To traverse the terrace, confident that time  
Would wait the completion of his enterprise.  
Watching his dauntless progress, I thought of the days  
When tortoises were the crown of created things,  
Immeasurably beyond the amoeba.  
I saw the primeval forest, the tangled swamp,  
The sandy waste—and indestructible time  
Brooding over the fern fronds. And I thought  
The morning stars might well have sung for joy  
Had evolution ceased with tortoises.

FREDA C. BOND



## INTO KINGS

By MARGIAD EVANS

HARRY WAS FIVE. He simplified everything. And he couldn't understand why such a tiny cottage was called a castle. Peewit Castle. He asked what a peewit was, and they told him it was that bird up there. He shook his head. Kings, not birds, lived in castles.

The name was written over the door. Mr. Lackitt had painted it in the kind of thin white paint which is used for signs reading "Licensed to sell tobacco" over country porches. The coarse-grained, twilight grey wood showed through the letters, and the two words were divided by a stop about as big as a dumpling. The Lackitts lived in the Castle. There was Mr. Lackitt, Mrs. Lackitt, and somebody his mother called Miss Lackitt. She was strange. Harry remembered them before he went to sleep. He had a minute vivid memory of the kind of smells they had—white roses, velvet dust, fur, and onions. He neither lived nor remembered in sequence, and life and his dreams appeared without season. He was a busy visionary.

The cottage was in a turnip field, close to a wood. Mrs. Lackitt's brown, loosely and knottily knitted shawl was like bark. When she was in the raspberries, it caught on the big grey and green leaves, and pulled out behind her like a tent.

Mrs. Lackitt was a tall, strong old woman, who folded her arms. Her eyes were black, but in the middle of them shone a diminutive light, like a vigil. She wore a blue apron. Her husband was older. He was usually down at the bottom of the orchard where the trees strained away from one another in order to keep apart. He kept pigs. The Lackitts didn't seem to live in their cottage, but to lead a brisk outdoor existence round about it among their livestock.

Harry went there nearly every day. They didn't mind ; they were fond of him. The old man seldom spoke ; but he used to bend down his silent face and blink at the little boy, and he did this so funnily that it was pleasanter than words.

The leaves were falling out of the trees. There was a golden sloping wind. The great loose-leafed elms held the gusts and then let them out with a high over-your-head sound. Mrs. Lackitt knelt in the lane beside a crock, gathering acorns from under the oaks for the pigs. Harry felt the fine mesh of the mist closing round his warm cheeks. He picked up a dead crow with bald white elbows of bone.

"Is this a peewit?"

"Let un alone, dirty boy. That's a Johnny Crow. They hens 'ave bin pickin' un." And Mrs. Lackitt got up stiffly to shoo the hens out of the orchard with her skirts, for, said she, "They don't lay because them do pick at the cider apples."

"Come, and I'll give you something nice," she said. She took his hand and led him down the garden to the raspberry canes.

"There," she said. She let the wet berries roll from her palm into his. She shook the rain clusters off the sticky leaves and sprays and made a lapping noise with her lips.

"Mrs. Lackitt, these raspberries don't taste of raspberries."

"What do um taste of then?"

"Raspberries and water."

The old woman grinned. She liked talking to the child. A son of hers was buried in Scotland, a daughter between the mists of mountain and sea. Half-gipsy, it comforted her to tell someone about her youthful travelling. In those days her surviving child had been as others. Then she had gone to be a servant. One day, after market, a drunken gentleman had taken her up in his trap. He flogged his

horse ; it had bolted and flung the girl out. He was unharmed, but she was crippled for life. She sat all day by the fire poking it with a stick viciously, as if the flames were a nest of adders. She looked terribly like a little old man. Harry was afraid of her. Only once he had spoken to her.

"Are you lonely?" he said. It was a word he had heard used for grief. And then softly and profoundly: "Do you wish you were the only person in the world?"

"Go away," she gruffed at him, clutching her stick.

"There, there, boy, leave her alone," Harry remembered Mrs. Lackitt pulling him away and whispering. "She bain't reely cross, but her'll never be right again."

After that he looked at her secretly, wincing from her notice. Her face was as though worn away by thought, its expression of disdain and privation never changed. She couldn't turn sideways, but she could bend forward to strike at the fire. She used to do this about every five minutes unless she was asleep, or carefully pinning on a board the skins of moles that Mr. Lackitt trapped. With their pallid mavvish membrane and the thin red-ink veins, they looked like tiny maps when she had tacked them down. They were dried and wrapped up in newspaper, and put under the cushion until she felt she wanted to count them. Sometimes she would throw a whole lot on the fire.

Harry could remember the beginning of his visits. At first he used to go with his mother, holding her hand. They went for eggs. They stood in the porch, and Mother passed the basket over his head. Mrs. Lackitt took it inside, and they waited, Harry trying to push the white roses back through the trellis. It was a long time before the basket was returned. Then his mother said, "How beautiful Mrs. Lackitt. How kind!"

Each egg was wrapped in hay. Pale pink, and milky,

brown or golden, faintly mauve, he unwound them on the table at home. On the top lay a sprig of green leaves with a sweet lemony smell, and there was always one extra egg for him.

It was exciting, unwrapping the snuggled eggs. His fingers trembled—he felt they would go through the shell.

And now for years and years he had been coming by himself. Each day he came. Each day the Harry of yesterday seemed somebody else. He used to talk now of “when I were a baby”.

Only one rule his mother made: he was never to eat anything at the Lackitt's. They were poor, with their invalid to keep. He never told her about the raspberries. It was November. The foggy trees leaked mist; the brown winds were visible with leaves. Yellow and tortoiseshell grey and lacquer red, mahogany and gingerbread colour, they span and skimmed. Between the afternoons and the twilight stretched an hour of intense silence. The sun came close, as though listening. Harry's days went with him into his nights, filling the darkness of his drowsy eyes with the colours and the scenes. Only the words never came back with the other treasures. He began to be aware that he was a being—a *private* being, and that he need not tell.

Sometimes he seemed interrupted. His mother watched him sitting on the floor, his ruffled games abandoned. The toys, left so purposeless, looked startled, accidental.

“What are you doing, Harry?”

“I'm thinking about the Lackitts, mother.”

His mother coaxed him: “Yes, darling. They're very kind to you. But what are you thinking?”

“It's something they've got.”

She stared. “What is it?”

But he was silent. He turned away his head with a peculiar, stately reticence. His new, gentle refusal amazed

her. Looking straight ahead, he smiled, as if he had seen something pleasing and grand in a glass.

"I hope," she thought, picking up the vermilion engine which looked so extraordinarily like a real accident, "I hope this doesn't mean he's been riding that scurfy old donkey. He's such an *outdoor* child. The Lackitts are *very kind*, but . . ."

It was rather as if the Lackitt's kindness had fleas in it. She wished he had somewhere else to go. She didn't know what to do with him in the afternoons. Oh, well.

What had happened to Harry was that he had seen a sign. It was one day when he couldn't find Mrs. Lackitt. The old man was in the orchard, at the far end, gossiping by nods to someone in the lane. Harry stayed to watch the uncouth conversation for a little while, and then he ran back to the cottage. He pushed the door open and stumbled over the serge curtain into the room. The twilight inside came like a dimness over his eyes. After a moment in which he could hardly breathe for terror lest someone strange should be hiding among the furniture, he saw there was only the invalid.

An unknown animation was on her face. She might have been talking fast, but she made no sound. Her eyes were opening and shutting quicker than anything he had ever seen, and her mouth seemed to be talking. That was why he had thought there must be somebody silent in the room, looking at her, to make her twitch back so wildly.

And then, going close in his bewilderment, he saw she was asleep, and it was the firelight moving on her mouth and her eyes. The firelight was giving her long dark eye-lashes of shadow that rose and fell, rose and fell, shaggy and startled. Her whole countenance was panting. After watching for a moment, he ignored her. An apple had rolled from her lap to the floor. With an involuntary snatch which seemed to escape him, he picked it up and

bit it, his eyes rolling round, over the fat apple in which his teeth were stuck.

He had never been alone in the Lackitt's room before. And it was a nice room, full of lovely things, shiny and small such as he could hold in one hand.

Gripping the apple in his teeth, hurriedly, because he felt his jaws meeting, and the bite coming out, Harry first pulled up one sock and then the other. And then, restrainedly, as if he had but few movements to spend, he began to step round the furniture, touching, admiring, and lifting into a better light the collection of ornaments and trinkets. He thought the china boys, the vases and little boxes and cups upside down in their saucers, were so pretty, so very wonderful and valuable. There was gold paint on the boys' hatbands and on the cup handles, thick stripes of it ending in little shiny stick-out roses which he fondled with a realistic delight. Indeed, those old cups were really charming and lovely, and so was the large leaning wall mirror of gilt on wood. It was even older than the china, and not dusted so often, and the golden patina was dimmed and softer, from the fine ash dust and the smoke in the airless room. Two rounded pillars wreathed with formal moulded rings, and a ribboned and feathered galaxy at the top framed it. Into its grey misty glass it gathered all the strays of light there were, reflecting them as still flashes whiter and brighter than the fire. To look into it was like looking at the sky through a wood, where colourless clear shapes are cut out of the black-brown branches.

With the poetry of all mirrors, whether sixpenny or Sheraton, it seemed to reflect not only light, but *stillness*. The quality of abidingness which poverty, closeness, and use, had given to the chairs and tables, was compacted in the mirror into a tilted but solid peace. In the glass even the clock pendulum seemed to wave more slowly. Harry

turned to look at it, and was puzzled by the quick way it really jerked against the wall. Harry's self went sideways into the glass, which stood on a low chest of drawers. He could see himself down as far as the belt of his mackintosh, a little boy in a green sou-wester.

Pleased and somehow proud, he stretched his arms with a straining of stiff rubber folds. Turning his palms from him he looked at his dirty little hands still red from playing with the rusty wet gate. Opening and shutting his fingers, the thought of how much he would do with them when he wanted to begin occurred to him happily.

He felt his shoulders, the top of his head, his breast, and saw himself repeating the touches. There was the beating under the hand that pressed, but dimly he understood there being no heart to thud in the glass.

Forgetting she wasn't there, he turned to ask "Mrs. Lackitt, why—?"

Quietly, outside, with regular pauses, the rain ticked into the butts. The fire sighed and settled on its nest. The shadowy eyelashes no longer flickered fast on the invalid's face, but a delicately formed darkness like a hand lay across her forehead.

The boy, with his face literally almost upon a magic moment, gave two quick gasps. Indeed, whatever the simple explanation, the chance was amazing, that he should have been the one to meet it. But this was all that was, in any sense, preternatural, though the glimpse was exquisite and perfect in its way.

A cheap round shaving glass had been put down on the crochet runner. It was a softened magnified reflection of one gilded wreath that looked from the angle of Harry's height like a beautiful crown . . . Exactly like a crown. Into Harry's eyes came the uncovetous rapture of the child who for the first time sees royal gold.

He didn't connect it with fact. Instantly, the likeness of

a crown, suggesting story and glorification, became part of the Lackitts.

Harry saw the orchard; and walking in it, strangely altered, and yet the same, were the Lackitts, crowned and wearing trains. But the invalid was out of it.

Hadn't he always wanted to know why they lived in a castle? It was the greatest of marvels, the most delicious answer, that went straight, it seemed, and struck into his breast, into the beating of his heart which burned up like a fire of raiment and jewels and gold. The most real of stories seemed about to begin. He saw Mrs. Lackitt as queen with a great yellowy ring round her brows. And driving her, in the little black tub, Mr. Lackitt, the king. Poor drab old Nellie the donkey disappeared, and in her place in the shafts trotted a circus pony with red harness . . .

He didn't believe in the crown, any more than he believed that the excited heart he could feel was alive in the mirror. Yet, like the heart, it existed *outside*. Perhaps, yes, somewhere?

He turned. The invalid's eyes were wide open and fixed on him with a gentle, mortal glance. It was as if Miss Lackitt had woken up someone else, and Harry ran to her, pressing his fists into her lap, deep into the rough little pink and black tongues of the rag rug.

"Whose—who—who?" he stammered, pointing, feeling as his meaning were changing in his mind before he could settle on it.

He could feel how calm she was. It was strange when she put her hand out and touched him, how quiet the gesture was.

"Why, wasn't you asleep then?" he asked, surprised.

"Come and sit on my knee," she said; but her arms could only make gaunt hard movements, and she had no power in them to lift him, controlled as they were by her warped spine.



"I ate your apple," he mumbled, atoning. But she made no answer. He was astonished that she should be crying.

He would have liked to have said something, but shyness made him hide his face.

"Why, look at that now!"

It was Mrs. Lackitt's voice. She stood in the doorway, her husband crowded up against her. She was holding a bucket; and he had two dead fowls by their legs. They both peered and stared.

Mrs. Lackitt had been feeding the livestock. Chaff had blown into her hair and her eyes, and clung to her clothes. She set the bucket down with a rattle. Mr. Lackitt pushed by her as if to go into the lean-to at the back, but he paused in the middle of the room with a perfectly blank face.

Harry didn't understand their silence. Mrs. Lackitt lifted the corner of her shawl and wiped the rain off her face. Harry thought she, too, was in tears, but it was only the trembling of an old restless lament that went over her features.

"Mrs. Lackitt!" he cried, "Mrs. Lackitt."

But he couldn't tell, after all. It was something he could only have himself, to keep and to question.

After a moment Mr. Lackitt decided to move. He shuffled into the lean-to and threw the fowls under the sink. Then he searched along the shelf for his pipe. He was the only person of the four to whom nothing could possibly have been otherwise than as it was.

## THAT WILL BE ALL

By MAURICE LINDSAY

"YOU MUSTN'T GO about again when you're running a temperature," said the doctor. "It shouldn't need me to tell you that."

The man in the bed mumbled something about doing one's duty and not giving in.

"No excuse at all," the doctor interrupted. "It's the behaviour of a schoolboy frightened that he'll miss a treat."

"I'm sorry, doctor," the patient answered lamely. "I always feel reluctant to give up, though."

"Why?" asked the doctor bluntly.

"Why? Oh, I don't know. Something I once did, perhaps."

The doctor looked curious. His eyes searched the patient's face.

"What did you once do?"

The sick man sighed and looked up at the doctor before answering.

"It is a long story, but I'd like to tell you, because it forms one of these scenes that continually reappear in the mind for years—like a familiar drop-curtain. Can you stay and have some tea, then?"

The doctor glanced at his watch. "Yes, I think I can," he said. "I had planned to take a few hours' recreation this afternoon and go out with my wife; but she's had to attend to an urgent case out of town, so I'll accept your invitation."

The doctor settled himself into a friendly leather arm-chair, and the sick man tugged the bell-cord which dangled by his bedside. Almost at once, a woman appeared.

"Well, how is he?" she asked.

"I'm much better, thank you, Mrs. Gregory," the patient informed her. "Do you think the doctor and I might have some tea?"

"Glad to hear it," the woman answered. "Next time maybe you'll take an old woman's advice and strangle the 'flu in time. Feed the cold and starve the fever. That's what my mother—the Lord bless her dear soul—used to say." She waited for this prescription to sink in. "Right. I'll get you both a spot of tea," she promised, and vanished through the door. The doctor brought out his pipe and tobacco pouch. The man in the bed adjusted his pillows and began to talk.

"The incident took place in the Summer of 1940. You remember the time: we thought the Germans were coming. By the merest fluke, they didn't; so we patted ourselves on the back and swelled with quiet pride when our journalists called us heroic. I was in the army then, guarding a remote stretch of coastline in East Anglia. We lived in pasteboard bungalows which had been the dubious retreats of tired London business men. Apart from our bungalows, there wasn't a building for miles around. The country was flat and unbroken, except for the high reeds in the marsh which stretched behind us to the woods in the distance. It was an eerie place. By day, the sun shone and the sands gleamed like burnished copper. It looked very safe and inviting. But at night, the Autumn winds drove in from the North Sea and flailed across the marshland with a long, low howl. After heavy rain, sickening noises could be heard—thick, sucking noises; as if the swamp was trying to swallow itself. The road to the nearest village ran back through the marsh on a slightly raised embankment."

He paused.

"I've got the picture," said the doctor. "Go on." He was listening with the eagerness of a small child. The patient smiled a little, and continued.

"I had a platoon. We were responsible for a piece of coast that had a big T-shaped creek cut into it. On the sandy peninsulas that fronted the sea and whose tips formed

the banks of the entrance channel, we had dug section weapon pits which were occupied night and day. About half an hour before first light, the whole platoon crept out of billets and along the shores of the peninsulas where they manned the positions at full strength until daybreak.

"On the night it happened, I had got up earlier than usual to check the reserve ammunition with the duty section in my command post. We checked one post each night for practice. It was misty; about 3.30 a.m.; and although still dark, I could feel the grey haar hanging in the atmosphere. One couldn't see more than a few yards in any direction. A bitter wind was blowing, and behind us the marshes sighed and groaned. The waves broke listlessly in front of the steep parapet which protected my post, throwing up a faintly phosphorescent foam. The sea gave off its strong odour of iodine; the sand was sour and damp.

"Checking ammunition by the light of a shaded torch isn't the easiest of tasks under the best conditions. And for me that morning, the conditions were by no means the best. For one thing, I had slept more soundly than usual. To get out of a warm camp-bed, throw on damp, crushed clothes and sea-boots, and go into the wind and darkness can never become an automatic sequence for a townsman. The ammunition had to be counted very carefully, too. Stored in flimsy wooden boxes, the continuous dampness encouraged a pale green mould to grow on the cases of the rounds if they were not frequently shifted. And in these days we had no ammunition to waste. I was intent, therefore, on my task. The savagely pointed rounds lay before me on a groundsheet. As I counted them in the feeble glimmer—for all the world like an old Cornish pirate gloating over his gains by lanternlight—I handed them in bundles to Robinson, the storeman, who packed them up again.

"We had got about half-way through the job when the

stand-to men began to move out. I heard the usual noises made by soldiers unaccustomed to patrolling by night—the soft clang of a rifle coming into contact with a steel helmet; the occasional over-loud stage-whisper. But I also heard a strange far-away scuffling noise, like a heavy object dragging over sand. So I got out of my dug-out and ran down to the edge of the peninsula. It was still so dark that I could hardly see the tip of the other peninsula twenty yards across. The tide was on the turn, and the water in the channel seethed and bubbled. I sent one of the N.C.O.'s on the long trek round to investigate, and since the noise had already subsided, went back to my counting.

“I had scarcely lowered myself into the dug-out—indeed I was still engaged in manœuvring my body inside my clothes to free the cloud of sand from the loosely constructed roof, that had followed my descent and poured down my neck—when I heard the sudden charter of frightened voices. For all his show of independence and his strong dislike of authority, the ordinary soldier turns to his officer with the helplessness of a dog in pain as soon as something goes wrong. I could read a situation out of hand in this sudden, unguarded burst of talking. Once again I raced down to the water's edge, this time with the storeman at my heels.

“A small, oarless boat was drifting sideways down the opposite creek with alarming speed. It seemed to contain three soldiers. One of them was standing up and shouting. He looked as if he was going to topple the boat over.

“‘Sit down Archie, you fool,’ bellowed my storeman at the pitch of his voice. With the corner of an eye, I noticed that he was unlacing his boots. I wondered what to do. In considerably less than a minute, the boat would reach the whirlpool of the entrance channel, and if it did not turn turtle, it would certainly be carried out to sea. With a hot, heavy feeling around the heart, I realized that there

was nothing I could do. Confronted with my first emergency since I became an officer, there was nothing I could do to stave off disaster. At worst, I reflected, the boat would capsize, and the men would have to swim for it, or fumble towards the banks as best they could. Their equipment and ammunition would be damaged, and that must mean all sorts of inquiries. At best the boat would drift until the naval launch from the nearest base came to its assistance.

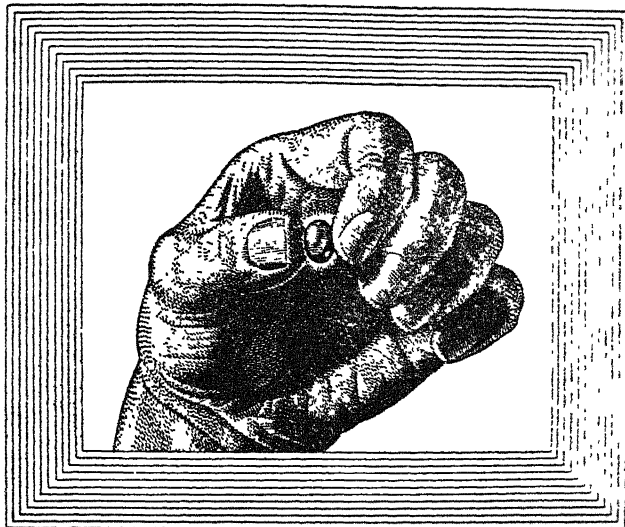
"But I had no time to think clearly. The boat lurched into the channel in front of me. For two or three seconds it looked as if it must capsize. Vague notions about drowning stirred in my head. It seemed as if they'd ride it: I began to feel relief. And then one of the men lost his head. It all took place so quickly that I could not at first see who he was. With a cry like a stricken animal, he leapt into the whirlpool, holding his rifle high in the air. At once he sank from sight, and the boat swept out to the open sea. Robinson, the storeman, must have anticipated something like this, for suddenly he flung himself into the water and began to swim towards the centre of the channel. His shirt and trousers lay with his boots in a heap at my feet.

"Clumsily, I followed him. The water was sharp and cold, but I hardly noticed. As I started to swim, the man came to the surface. His frightened call for help spurred me on. To my horror, I found that I was making no progress. My boots had filled with water, and were tugging me backwards. I was entirely at the mercy of the current. Again, the man came to the surface and screamed in a shrill, inhuman voice. I could see Robinson ahead of me, making heavy weather, but he was a strong swimmer, and could at least keep direction.

"All at once my energy gave out. My impressions blurred into a sear of pain and the instinctive urge to save myself. Breathing became tight and forced. I turned, and struggled in what I hoped was the direction of the shore.

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Then the dying man broke surface for the last time. I shall never forget that terrible, abandoned cry so long as I live. It was as if the monstrous, octopus-heart of the whirlpool was squeezing the final human vibrations from his body. He gave a loud, desperate gurgle. There was an awful silence, broken only by the insistent ringing of coloured bells in my head. I was utterly exhausted when men with strained faces—scared men who had never seen a man die before—pulled me to safety.

“When I had sufficiently recovered, I sent a runner to fetch the Company Commander. And I asked for Robinson. Someone waved in the direction of a group clustered together a few yards along the beach. They were watching two men swimming in front of the boat, gradually towing it nearer the shore. I started to shiver violently, sensing my soaking clothes for the first time. Mechanically I began to undress. A dry shirt was produced. Clad only in this and a woollen scarf, I went to meet the Company Commander. But he had at once set out for the creeks when he heard the commotion; and my runner, who encountered him half-way, related one version of the story.

“I told him what had happened, in bare, unhappy words. By the time we reached the beach, Robinson and his companion had piloted the boat into shallow water, and the other two men were landed. The Company Commander spoke to Robinson, and ordered us both to go and put on some warm things. It was light by the time I got back. An east wind had sprung up, dispersing the haar and shifting the gloomy black-and-grey setting of the drowning. The sea brisked up to the new wind; sharp scuds of spray flicked across the channel entrance, and the sands turned yellow again.

“The Company Commander was a regular soldier with over ten years’ service. He looked men in the eyes like an animal, and tried to create the impression that he gave



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no regard for his personal fate. The men were dragging for the body when I came over to him.

“ ‘Oh, hullo old man,’ he grunted, without looking round. ‘You O.K.? Nasty business. Still! Can’t be helped. He had to get it sometime.’

“ ‘Yes,’ I repeated, ‘he had to get it sometime.’ It gave me a queer feeling to hear my own voice echo this stupid platitude. I thought of Wilson’s wife—the dead man had been identified by a roll-call. I knew all my men well—their private histories and many of their family troubles. Wilson had often spoken of his wife. ‘Funny,’ he’d said to me once on a long route march, ‘the things we do and the places we live in. My missus ’ud never have believed that I’d ever be bloody glad to get a few hours’ kip in a police cell.’

“The Company Commander left me and waded into the water where a group of men struggled with the net that had caught something at the bottom. ‘Got him,’ he shouted, and doubled his exertions. The men were silent. For most of them this was the first encounter with death. Before, it had been a word said in church; something which happens without fuss to the old. A long way ahead, of course, it would happen to them. But a long way ahead.

“I watched them guide the submerged load in the net to the shallow water. The Company Commander made jokes—grim jokes. Nobody laughed. The body broke surface. Slowly they carried it ashore and laid it on a mound of grass.

“ ‘Must pump the sea out of the poor wallah,’ said the Company Commander, going through the motions of artificial respiration. A trickle of dirty water squirted over the edge of the dead man’s mouth. The side of his face was a patch of sand. His black, sodden clothes clung to the shape of his limbs. A drawn, white hand still clutched the rifle. Eyes filled with the terror of certain destruction

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stared out at us. A fierce wave of anger surged against my heart, gathered, and burst. As a child, I had seen death come to the aged—an aunt whom I had greatly loved. Then, the atmosphere was thick and heavy, and smelt of natural decay. My nurse took me into the room where the coffin lay. The blinds were drawn, in the Scottish fashion, and the room was filled with flowers; pale flowers. The shining coffin with thick brass handles lay on coarse wooden trestles with the lid pulled aside. I looked in. There was my aunt resting on soft white pillows, a tired white smile on her face. And although a momentary shock surged through me when I felt the cold sting of her dead flesh on my warm lips, she seemed so peaceful and satisfied that I was happy for her. Now her spirit was with the Lord in flowing robes whose Kingdom we sang about in the Sunday School.

“But this was mocking and bitter; for him there was no kingdom; only a blind injustice.

They laid him on an old garage door and took him to a deserted tool-shed at the far end of the beach. His two best friends volunteered to wash him down and dress him in his walking-out suit. For three days he lay alone. It became very hot. A faint smell seemed to hang about the area of his hut. The men avoided it whenever they could. On the fourth day, the regulation coffin arrived, and an army lorry took him to the station to go on the Scottish train. The whole company gathered to give him a send-off. They watched the truck bump up the narrow track until it passed out of sight. Each thought about the first comrade to go. ‘That will be all,’ said the Company Commander casually. In twos and threes they slouched away.”

For a moment the doctor said nothing. “Surely you don’t think you could have saved the man?” he asked.

“I shall never know,” the patient sighed. “I turned back while there was still a chance.” His tone changed.

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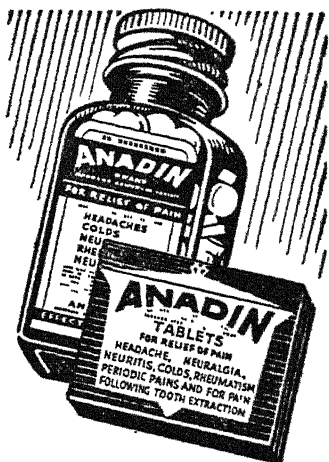
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